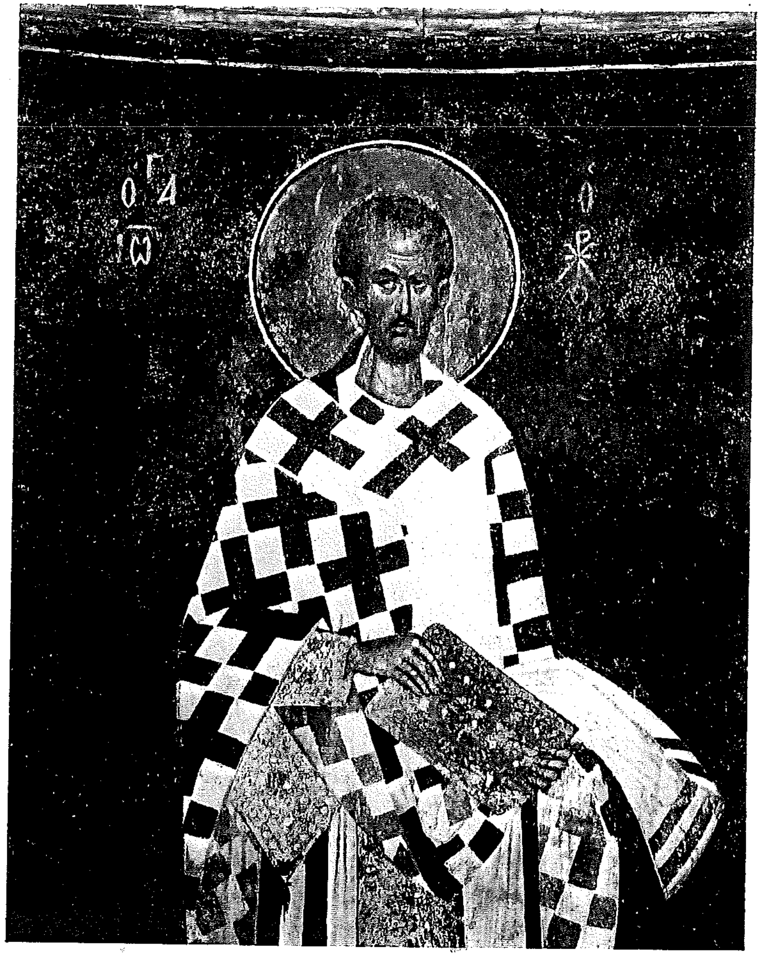


The Byzantine Institut

St John Chrysostom, taken from the fresco in the chapel of Kariye Camii in Istanbul.

NICHOLAS CABASILAS

A COMMENTARY ON THE DIVINE LITURGY

Translated by
J. M. HUSSEY
and
P. A. McNULTY

With an Introduction by
R. M. FRENCH

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FOREWORD

VERY little is known of the life of Nicholas Cabasilas. Neither his birth nor his death can be dated with precision. Scholars have usually thought that the few biographical facts available show him to have been born about the year 1300, but recently a case has been made for putting his birth in the twenties of the fourteenth century and making him a contemporary of Demetrius Cydones.[1] He was in any case living at the time when the Byzantine Empire was convulsed by civil war between the Cantacuzenes and the Palaeologans. Nicholas Cabasilas was a devoted adherent of the Emperor John VI Cantacuzenus. He was indeed his close personal friend, and as the Emperor was himself a historian of his own times, he mentions Cabasilas once or twice. It is in this way that we learn that in 1346 Nicholas Cabasilas was one of two ambassadors sent by the city of Thessalonica to Manuel Cantacuzenus at Beroea. This Manuel was the second son of John VI whose cause he was defending at a time when his father had been driven from the throne. The details of this war need not be followed here.[2] It was waged with varying success. A compromise was patched up in 1347 and John Cantacuzenus sat uneasily on the throne with his former ward John V Palaeologus till 1355. But the estrangement between the two emperors grew steadily deeper and in 1353 John V Palaeologus appealed to arms again. John Cantacuzenus maintained his position, with the help of the Turks. But he then took a step which made the breach final. He associated his son Matthew with him in the purple. This was more than Constantinople would endure and he was forced to abdicate. John Palaeologus, the rightful heir, continued to rule and John Cantacuzenus became the monk Joasaph, the theological

[1] See I. Ševčenko, Nicolas Cabasilas' "Anti-Zealot" Discourse, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 11 (1957), pp. 85–6.

[2] The best short account of the Byzantine Empire in the fourteenth century is in G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, Oxford, 1956.

controversialist and historian. This was no new idea. Half a dozen years earlier he had planned to retire to a monastery. This is of special interest to readers of this book, for part of the plan was that Nicholas Cabasilas should be one of two friends whom the Emperor wished to accompany him, because of their very great wisdom and the chastity of their lives in the unmarried state. The project came to nothing at the time. Nor is it known whether or not Cabasilas went with the Emperor when he did in fact enter religion after his abdication at the end of 1354. On the occasion of Matthew Cantacuzenus's elevation in 1354 Nicholas Cabasilas pronounced a eulogy upon him which has survived. But the Patriarch of Constantinople, whose name was Callistus, refused to consecrate Matthew, and as a result was deposed. When the bishops assembled to choose a new Patriarch, they submitted three names to the Emperor. Two of the candidates were the Metropolitans of Heraclea and Philadelphia and the third was Nicholas Cabasilas, who, the Emperor tells us, was still a layman. The Emperor's choice, however, did not fall upon his personal friend, and Philotheus of Heraclea became the new Patriarch. There is nothing to show that Cabasilas ever attained high ecclesiastical office, nor indeed that he was ever ordained at all. The view at one time widely held that he succeeded his uncle Nilus Cabasilas as Archbishop of Thessalonica is no longer accepted.[1] Until evidence to the contrary is discovered it must be assumed that Cabasilas remained a layman.[2] If this is so, it is one more illustration of the fact that the lay theologian is much more common in Eastern than in Western Christendom.

Nicholas Cabasilas lived in times not only of political strife but also of theological controversy. Besides the perennial dispute with Rome the Orthodox Church itself was profoundly disturbed and divided by the question of "Palamism". To the Orthodox, the Christian *par excellence* was the monk, and among the monks the most revered were the "hesychasts"

[1] See H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, Munich, 1959, pp. 700 ff.

[2] But cf. Ševčenko, op. cit., pp. 86–7, for evidence that he may have joined a "holy community".

who lived alone, each in his own retreat, practising incredible austerities and spending his time in prayer and the stillness (*hesychia*) of contemplation. In the fourteenth century these solitaries of Mount Athos held that the climax of hesychast contemplation was the vision of the divine light, which was nothing less than the pure essence of God, the uncreated Light which shone on Mount Tabor in the Transfiguration of our Lord. This doctrine was assailed as blasphemous by a Calabrian monk named Barlaam. But it found an able defender in the celebrated Gregory Palamas (whence the name Palamism), who worked out a theological theory for it, and it was finally accepted officially at the Council of St Sophia in 1351. Palamas was the immediate predecessor of Nilus Cabasilas in the archiepiscopal see of Thessalonica. The Emperor John Cantacuzenus supported[1] Palamas and the Athonite monks, and presided at the Council of St Sophia. And it was here that the sympathies of Nicholas Cabasilas lay. But the view that he changed sides during the controversy and was at first a Barlaamite seems to be mistaken and due to confusion with another Cabasilas.[2] It may be added that Nilus was Nicholas Cabasilas's uncle on his mother's side. The name was a distinguished one; it was borne by more than one of our author's contemporaries, and he evidently preferred to be known by it. His father's family name was Chamaetus, and Nicholas is sometimes referred to by both names together. Nilus, the uncle, died in 1363, two years after his appointment to Thessalonica, without ever having been able to take possession of his see. He wrote a work on the Procession of the Holy Spirit, which his nephew, Nicholas, edited with a preface of his own.

Nicholas Cabasilas wrote a number of works, including homilies and lives of saints, some of which have been edited. But his fame rests mainly upon two major works. One is this *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, and the other *The Life in Christ*. The latter is in seven books and sets forth the

[1] For a suggestion of the reasons for this see Henri Grégoire in *Byzantium*, edd. N. H. Baynes and H. St. L. B. Moss, Oxford, 1948, p. 115.

[2] See S. Salaville, *Explication de la Divine Liturgie* (*Sources chrétiennes*), Paris, 1943, p. 9.

supernatural life of the Christian in terms of the Pauline conception of the Church as the Body of Christ. The union with Christ is real and close, mediated by the grace of the sacraments accepted and made fruitful by the co-operation of men.

Both that and the *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* have been justly held in high esteem, not only among the writer's fellow Orthodox but in the West also, and that in spite of the anti-Latin polemic in chapters 29 and 30 of the present book. Salaville in the introduction to his French translation published in 1943 refers to the use made of it and the high value attached to it by the Council of Trent. English readers also, to whom Professor J. M. Hussey and Miss P. A. McNulty now make this work of Cabasilas available for the first time,[1] will endorse the view that the theological perception, the learning, and deep piety of the *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* will prove of much value to all who desire to enrich their understanding of the meeting of heaven and earth in the great act of Christian worship.

It may be of interest to add here a modern western writer's account of the impression made upon him by a portrait of Cabasilas in the Church of the Protaton on Mt Athos. "Il m'a bouleversé, tant il est suggestif de cette mystique de la transfiguration et de la lumière de Thabor; c'est l'image de Nicolas Cabasilas, le grand écrivain mystique. Aucun personnage du Greco n'atteint, je crois, à cette plénitude spirituelle. Rarement un artiste ne disposant que d'une surface murale et d'une palette, n'a réussi à suggérer avec une telle intensité l'idéal d'une vie exclusivement consacrée à la recherche vécue de Dieu. Cette image inoubliable est toute pénétrée d'une gravité surhumaine, mais elle est aussi imprégnée d'une paix, d'une joie au delà de toute intelligence et de tout concept. Pour comprendre l'âme profonde de l'Athos, il faut longuement contempler cet être émacié dématérialisé, mais vivant d'une vie mystique qui l'inonde de lumière et d'allégresse."[2]

[1] For the Greek text see J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 150.

[2] E. A. de Mendieta, *Le presqu' île des caloyers: Le Mont-Athos*, Bruges, 1955, p. 190.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction and the Prothesis
(*Commentary*, Chapters 1–11)

Readers of Cabasilas's Commentary will follow his thought more easily if they bear in mind the sequence of events in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in an Orthodox church. But a word must first be said about the arrangement of the eastern end of the building. In an Orthodox church the sanctuary is separated from the rest of the church by a screen called the iconostas. It stretches the full width of the building from wall to wall, but its height varies in different churches. It may even reach the roof and thus cut off completely the last few feet of the eastern end of the building. It is, however, always pierced by three doors. There are double doors in the centre, known as the Royal Doors, which open upon the holy table (there is in theory only one holy table in any one church, and only once on any given day may the Liturgy be offered at it, though the first part of this theory is not always observed). There is a door on the right as one faces east but it has no particular significance in the course of the Liturgy. The corresponding door on the left, however, is important for it leads into the Prothesis, where the first part of the Liturgy takes place. Thus the space behind the iconostas is divided into three parts, each of which may end in an apse; each has its door communicating with the rest of the church, and of course they communicate with each other. The door into the Prothesis is opened from time to time as the Liturgy proceeds, and the deacon (or the priest if there is no deacon) emerges to recite the litanies and lead the prayers of the worshippers. It is opened also for the two "entrances"—the Little Entrance before the reading of the Epistle and Gospel, and the Great Entrance when the bread and the wine are brought to the altar. On both these occasions a procession comes out from

the Prothesis, turns left through the church, and passes through the iconostas again by the central double doors. These are not so high as the opening in which they swing, and the space above them can be opened or closed by the drawing of a curtain.

The Divine Liturgy, as celebrated by the Orthodox Church, is divided into three parts. The first part is called the Prothesis and takes place in the chapel of that name. It is, therefore, visibly distinct from the other two parts of the Liturgy, which are said at the holy table, and between which there is no such visible break. They are the Liturgy of the Catechumens and the Liturgy of the Faithful. In Cabasilas's *Commentary* the first chapter is a general survey by way of introduction, chapters 2 to 11 deal with the Prothesis, chapters 12 to 23 comment on the Liturgy of the Catechumens; the rest of the book, from chapter 24 to the end, is concerned with the Liturgy of the Faithful.

In the following analysis the chapter numbers of Cabasilas's *Commentary* are inserted in brackets at the relevant places.

The numbering of the Psalms in the Greek text is according to the Septuagint. In the translation they are numbered according to the Authorized Version of the Old Testament.

The translation of the biblical references in the text also follows the Authorized Version, unless for the sake of clarity in a particular context a direct translation of Cabasilas's quotation is preferable.

The Prothesis

This part of the service is the preparation of the bread and wine which are to be taken to the holy table, and it is done with much more elaborate detail than in the West.[1] The Prothesis is performed by the ministers alone and the general congregation will not ordinarily assemble until the beginning of the Liturgy of the Catechumens.

[1] But it may be recalled that in some Anglican churches, notably in Westminster Abbey, the bread and the wine at the Offertory are brought in procession from a chapel to the high altar, and the occasion is one of a certain amount of ceremonial.

After the clergy have said an office of preparation, vested, and washed their hands, with the prescribed prayers, they enter the Prothesis[1] to prepare the offerings (cc. 2, 3, and 4).

The celebrant takes in his left hand one of the small loaves[2] of bread and in his right hand the lance, with which he proceeds to separate from the loaf that part of it which is stamped with the monogram

IC XP
NI KA

and which alone will later be consecrated at the altar (cc. 5–8). He signs it with the sign of the Cross and pierces the side of it with the lance. And the deacon pours wine and water into the chalice (cc. 6 and 8). All these symbolic actions are accompanied by words from the fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaiah, and announced by the threefold repetition of the words, "In remembrance of Our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ" (cc. 7 and 9). Cabasilas comments on this in his seventh chapter and again in the ninth, although they are pronounced first of all, before the incisions into the bread are made.

Before proceeding further in describing the Preparation, it must be clearly stated that the piece of bread bearing the monogram and separated from the rest of the loaf is the only bread which will be consecrated. It is called the Lamb or the Seal. The rest of the bread will be used as follows.

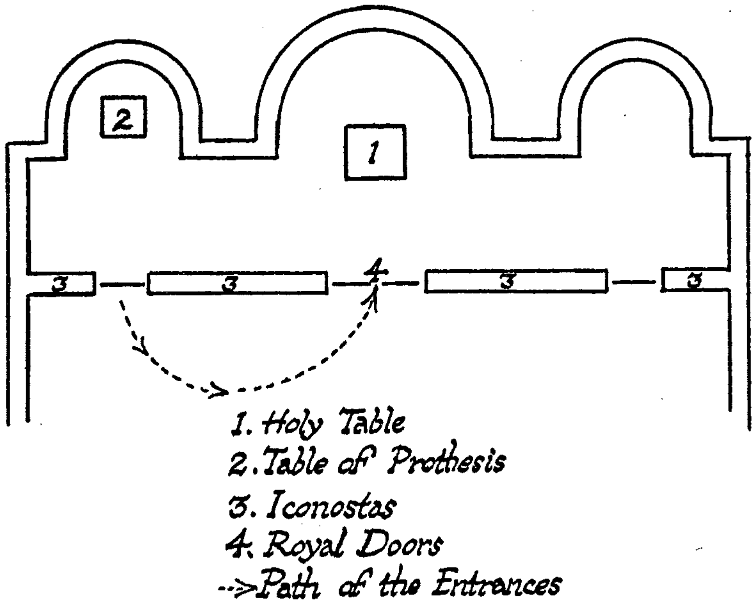
First a piece is cut out in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and this is placed at the right side of the Lamb.[3] Then three rows of three small pieces each are put on the other side of the Lamb in honour of the apostles, saints, and martyrs: and in front of the Lamb are arranged two rows of pieces for the living and the dead whom it is proposed to commemorate. All these portions of bread will be put into the chalice after the communion of the people. What remains of the loaf or loaves of oblation becomes the antidoron at the end of the service.

The paten is covered with the Star or *asterisk* (a metal cross

[1] The word is used both of this part of the church and of the part of the Liturgy said in it.

[2] The number of loaves used has varied at different times and in different countries.

[3] I.e. on the spectator's left.



of which the ends of the arms are bent downwards, so that the veil is held up from touching the breads on the paten) and a veil (c. 11). The chalice is also veiled: and over that a larger veil is used to cover them both.

The elements so prepared are censed and left on the table of the Prothesis. The priest enters the altar and stands before the holy table,[1] and the Liturgy of the Catechumens begins.

The Liturgy of the Catechumens

(*Commentary*, Chapters 12–23)

This part of the service is so called because the Catechumens, i.e those who were preparing for Baptism, were allowed to be present at it. They were dismissed before the Great Entrance and the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful. That is to say they were permitted to hear the preliminary

[1] In Orthodox phraseology "the altar" is the place which in the West is called "the sanctuary": thus the holy table, or the throne, stands in the altar.

prayers, anthems, and litanies and the reading of the Epistle and Gospel. But not until after Baptism might they hear the solemn recitation of the Creed or witness the offering of the Holy Mysteries.

The deacon asks for the blessing and the priest replies: "Blessed be the kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen" (c. 12). This is followed by the Great Litany, which is sung by the deacon (if there is one) on the people's side of the iconostas, standing before the Royal Doors (c. 12). The response after each petition is, "Lord, have mercy" (c. 13). The Litany is as follows:

Deacon: In peace let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For the peace from above and the salvation of our souls, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For the peace of the whole world, for the stability of the Holy Churches of God, and for the union of all, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For this Holy House and for those that enter it with faith, reverence and the fear of God, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For our Archbishop (*name*), the loyal presbyters, the diaconate in Christ, and for all the clergy and the people, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For this city and for every city and land and for the faithful who dwell in them, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For seasonable weather, for the abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For those that travel by land or by water, for the

sick, for those that suffer, for captives and for their salvation, let us beseech the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, danger and necessity, let us beseech the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Succour, save, comfort, and protect us, O God, with Thy favour.

It closes with the words:

"Commemorating our most holy, pure, blessed and glorified Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ, our God" (c. 14).

The next part of the service consists of the three Antiphons, each followed by short versicles and responses, and the Little Litany (which repeats the last petition and the commemoration of the Great Litany) accompanied by a prayer said secretly by the priest. The second of these prayers is the familiar Prayer of St Chrysostom in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.

Cabasilas comments first upon this part of the service as a whole (cc. 15, 16) and then upon each Antiphon separately. The Antiphons vary with the feast.[1] It is the ordinary Sunday ones which are dealt with here.

1. Ps. 92. "It is a good thing to confess unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High, to tell of Thy loving-kindness early in the morning and of Thy Truth in the night season" (c. 17).
2. Ps. 93. "The Lord is King, and hath put on glorious apparel, the Lord hath put on His apparel and girded Himself with strength, He hath made the Universe so sure that it cannot be moved" (c. 18).
3. Ps. 95. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our Salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving and show ourselves glad in Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God and a great King over all the earth" (c. 19).

[1] Ps. 103 and Ps. 146 are the usual Antiphons now sung in the Russian Orthodox Church.

After the Antiphons, the Little Entrance takes place. The ministers pass through the Prothesis and out to the front of the iconostas carrying the Book of the Gospels to the Royal Doors. After a short pause for certain prayers, the procession passes through the gates, the Book being carried aloft and then placed on the Holy Table (c. 20).

Then the Trisagion is sung in this form:

"Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us (*thrice*).

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. Both now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages, Amen.

Holy and immortal, have mercy upon us."

Deacon: Louder.

Choir: Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us" (c. 20).

Meanwhile the priest says secretly:[1]

"O Holy God, Who restest among Thy Saints and art glorified by the Cherubim and praised by the Seraphim with Thrice-holy Voice, and worshipped by all the Host of Heaven; Thou who has brought all things out of nothingness into being; Thou Who hast created man in Thine Image and Likeness, and hast adorned him with all Thy favours; Thou Who givest to the suppliant wisdom and prudence and dost not neglect the sinner, but hast set forth the way of repentance unto salvation; Thou Who hast accounted us, Thy humble and unworthy servants, worthy to stand at this time before the glory of Thy Holy Altar, and to bring to Thee meet adoration and praise; do Thou, Master, accept, even from the mouth of us sinners, the Thrice-holy Hymn and visit us in Thy Righteousness; forgive us all our transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, sanctify our souls and bodies and grant that we may worship Thee in holiness all the days of our life; through the intercessions of Thy Holy Mother and all the Saints, who from the beginning of time have pleased Thee; for Thou, our

[1] In Cabasilas's day this prayer came before the Trisagion.

God, art Holy and to Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen" (c. 20).

Before the reading of the Epistle which now follows, the deacon makes two exclamations, "Let us attend" and "Wisdom" (c. 21). The Epistle (called the "Apostle" in the Orthodox rite) is then read by the reader. The priest greets him with peace and then blesses the reader of the Gospel. Turning towards the people he cries, "Wisdom, stand and attend. Let us hear the Holy Gospel, Peace be with you." The deacon then sings the Gospel of the day (c. 22). He returns the book to the priest, and the doors are closed.

The deacon resumes his position before the doors and sings the Litany:

Deacon: Let us all say with our whole soul and with our whole mind let us say,
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: O Lord Almighty, God of our fathers, we pray Thee, hear and have mercy.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: Have mercy upon us, O God, according to Thy great mercy; we pray Thee, hear and have mercy.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: Again, we pray for godly and Orthodox Christians.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: Again, we pray for our Archbishop (*name*) and our whole Brotherhood in Christ.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: Again, we pray for the blessed and ever-memorable founders of this Holy Church, and for all our fathers and brethren that have fallen asleep before us and lie here in godly rest, and for the Orthodox everywhere.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: Again, we pray for grace, life, peace, health, salvation, protection, forgiveness and the remission of sins for Thy servants, for all pious and Orthodox Christians who dwell and are to be found in this city, and for the wardens and brethren of this Holy Church.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: Again, we pray for those who labour and bring forth fruit in this Holy and venerable Church, the workers, the singers, and the people here present, that look for Thine abundant and great mercy.
Choir: Lord, have mercy (c. 23).

The priest says a secret prayer concluding aloud with the Doxology: "For Thou, O God, art merciful and full of compassion, and to Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages."

Choir: Amen.

The Liturgy of the Faithful is about to begin, and in ancient days the Catechumens were dismissed at this point after prayer had been offered for them (c. 23). In modern times those present may all be assumed to be baptized, and the Litany of the Catechumens and the words of dismissal addressed to them, though still in the text of the Liturgy, are usually said inaudibly.[1] Two other prayers follow in which the priest prays for himself and his fellow ministers and all the worshippers (c. 23).

The Liturgy of the Faithful (1)
(Commentary, Chapters 24–32)

The Liturgy of the Faithful begins with the two short litanies which precede the Great Entrance, and opens with the words "All we who are the Faithful, again and again in peace let us beseech the Lord." The Great Entrance is the Procession, which, following the same path as the Little Entrance, brings the sacred vessels containing the prepared bread and wine from the Chapel of the Prothesis to the Altar (c. 24). This is done with all possible solemnity and externally is the most noticeable part of the whole service. While the Procession is marshalling in the Prothesis the Choir

[1] But usually aloud in the Russian Orthodox Church.

begins to sing the Cherubic Hymn (which strangely enough Cabasilas does not mention). It is as follows: "We, who mystically represent the Cherubim, sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity. Let us put away all earthly care, so that we may receive the King of All, invisibly escorted by the Angelic Hosts. Alleluia."

When the Choir reaches the words "King of All" a pause is made and the Procession takes place. Before it passes through the Royal Doors it halts and biddings to prayer are made. Then the Choir finishes the Cherubic Hymn when the Procession has entered the Sanctuary and the Holy Gifts are laid upon the Altar.

After the priest and deacon have in a low voice asked each other for their prayers and responded (c. 25), the deacon comes out and standing before the Royal Doors says this short Litany:

Deacon: Let us complete our supplication to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For the Precious Gifts that have been set forth, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For this Holy House and for those that enter it with faith, reverence and the fear of God, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, danger and necessity, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy (c. 25).

And again this Litany in which the response is: "Grant this, O Lord."

Deacon: Succour, save, comfort and protect us, O God, with thy favour.
For this whole day, that it may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, let us entreat the Lord.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: For an Angel of peace, a faithful Guide, a Guardian of our souls and bodies, let us entreat the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: For forgiveness and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us entreat the Lord.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: For those things that are good and profitable for our souls and for the peace of the world, let us entreat the Lord.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: That the remainder of our lives may be passed in peace and penitence, let us entreat the Lord.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: That the end of our lives may be Christian, without torment, blameless and peaceful, and that we may have a good defence before the fearful Judgment-Seat of Christ, let us entreat.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, pure, blessed, and glorified Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.
Choir: To Thee, O Lord.
Priest: Through the mercies of Thine Only-begotten Son, with Whom Thou art glorified, together with Thine All-Holy, righteous and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages.
Choir: Amen.

Then:

Priest: Peace be with you.
Choir: And with thy spirit.
Priest: Let us love one another that we may with one mind confess——
Choir: The Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Trinity consubstantial and undivided (c. 25).

The Creed follows (always without the words "and the Son" after "Who proceedeth from the Father"), but first the deacon cries aloud "The doors, the doors, with wisdom let us attend" (c. 26), and immediately after the Creed:

Deacon: Let us stand well; let us stand with fear; let us attend, that we may offer the Holy Oblation in peace.

Choir: A mercy of peace, a sacrifice of praise.

Priest: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Choir: And with thy spirit (c. 26).

The Anaphora, or Canon of the Mass now begins with the *Sursum Corda.*

Priest: Let us lift up our hearts.

Choir: We lift them up unto the Lord (c. 26, last paragraph).

Priest: Let us give thanks unto the Lord.

Choir: It is meet and right (c. 27).

Priest: (*secretly*) It is meet and right to praise Thee, to glorify Thee, to bless Thee, to give thanks to Thee, to worship Thee, in all places of Thy dominion, for Thou art God ineffable, incomprehensible, invisible, inconceivable, existing always as Thou dost exist, Thou and Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit. Thou hast brought us from nothingness into being, and when we fell away didst raise us up again, and Thou ceaseth not until Thou hast done everything, to bring us to Heaven, and confer on us Thy Kingdom to come. For all these things we give thanks to Thee and to Thine only-begotten Son and to Thy Holy Spirit, for all the things we know and do not know, for the seen and the unseen benefits which we enjoy. We render thanks to Thee also for this Service which Thou dost deign to receive at our hands, though Thou art surrounded by thousands of Archangels and tens of thousands of Angels, by the Cherubim and Seraphim that are six-winged, full of eyes and soar aloft on their wings, (*aloud*) singing, crying, shouting and saying the triumphal hymn:

Choir: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Thy Glory. Hosanna in the Highest: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest.

Priest: (*secretly*) We also, O merciful Master, with these celestial Powers cry and say: Holy art Thou and All-Holy, Thou and Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit. Holy art Thou and All-Holy and sublime is Thy Glory: Thou Who didst so love Thy world that Thou gavest Thine only-begotten Son, that whoso believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting Life. And when He had come and had fulfilled all that was needed for us, in the same night in which He was betrayed, or rather in which He gave Himself up for the Life of the World (c. 31), He took bread in His holy, pure and blameless Hands, and when He had given thanks and blessed and hallowed, He brake it and gave it to His holy Disciples and Apostles, saying:
(*aloud*) Take, eat: This is my Body which is broken for you, for the remission of sins.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: (*secretly*) Likewise after Supper the Cup, saying:
(*aloud*) Drink ye all of It: This is My Blood of the New Testament, Which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: (*secretly*) Commemorating this command of our Saviour and all that was endured for our sake, the Cross, the Grave, the Resurrection after three days, the Ascension into Heaven, the Enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second and glorious Coming again,
(*aloud*) Thine own of Thine own we offer to Thee, in all and for all.

Choir: We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks to Thee, O Lord, and we pray to Thee, O our God.

Priest: (*secretly*) Again we offer to Thee this reasonable and bloodless Service, and we ask and pray and

supplicate: send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these Gifts here presented.

Deacon: Master, consecrate the Holy Bread.

Priest: And make this Bread the Precious Body of Thy Christ,

Deacon: Amen.
Master, consecrate the Holy Cup.

Priest: And that which is in this Cup, the Precious Blood of Thy Christ,

Deacon: Amen.
Master, consecrate both the Holy Things together.

Priest: Changing (Them) by Thy Holy Spirit,

Deacon: Amen, Amen, Amen.

In the Orthodox view the words "changing them by thy Holy Spirit" complete the consecration. In chapters 28–30 Cabasilas considers the grounds for belief in the Consecration, and the criticisms by "certain Latins" of the Eastern form of Consecration, to which criticisms he replies.

The Liturgy of the Faithful (2)
(*Commentary*, Chapters 33–41)

Here follows silently a prayer for those who will communicate, commemorating the saints, and concluding aloud: "especially for our most holy, pure, blessed and glorified Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary".

Choir: It is very meet to bless Thee, the ever-blessed and most pure Virgin and Mother of our God, Thee that art more honourable than the Cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim, that, without spot of sin, didst bear God, the Word; and Thee, verily the Mother of God, we magnify.

Priest: (*secretly*) For holy John the Baptist, Prophet and Forerunner, for the holy, glorious, and honourable Apostles, for Saint (*of the day*) whose memory we celebrate, and for all Thy Saints, by whose supplication do Thou, O God, visit us. Be mindful also of all those who slumber in the hope of a resurrection to everlasting life. (*He commemorates whom he will.*) Give them rest, O God, where the light of Thy countenance shineth. Further, we entreat Thee, O Lord, be mindful of every Bishopric of the Orthodox, that they may teach Thy Truth aright, of all ecclesiastical rulers, of the diaconate in Christ, and of all clerical and monastic orders. Further, we offer to Thee this reasonable service for the World, for the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, for those living in purity and temperance, for our most faithful and Christian Kings, and for their whole court and army. Give to them, O Lord, peace in their kingdoms, that we also may have tranquillity in their calm, and may pass a peaceful life in all piety and temperance;
(*aloud*) above all, be mindful, O Lord, of our Archbishop (*name*); guard him for Thy Holy Churches in peace, with safety, honour, health, and length of days to teach aright the Word of Thy Truth.

Deacon: And of those whom each of us hath in mind, and of all men and women.

Choir: And of all men and women (c. 33).

Priest: (*secretly*) Be mindful, O Lord, of the city in which we sojourn and of every city and land of the faithful who dwell in them. Be mindful, O Lord, of those that travel by land or by water, of the sick, of those that suffer, of captives and of their salvation. Be mindful, O Lord, of those that serve and bring forth fruit in Thy Holy Churches and of those who remember the poor, and upon all of us send down Thy Mercies,
(*aloud*) and grant that with one mouth and one heart we may praise and glorify Thy sublime and wondrous Name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages.

Choir: Amen (c. 34).

Priest: And the mercies of Almighty God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ shall be with you all.
Choir: And with thy spirit.

Then follows the longer Litany by the deacon beginning:

Deacon: Being mindful of all the Saints, again and again in peace let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For these Precious Gifts which have been brought in and hallowed, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: That our merciful God, Who receiveth Them at His holy and heavenly and ethereal Altar as a sweet-scented, spiritual savour, may again send down upon us divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit, let us beseech.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: For our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, danger and necessity, let us beseech the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.
Deacon: Succour, save, comfort and protect us, O God, with Thy favour.
For this whole day, that it may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, let us entreat the Lord.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: For an Angel of Peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us entreat the Lord.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: For forgiveness and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us entreat the Lord.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: For those things that are good and profitable for our souls and for the peace of the world, let us entreat the Lord.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: That the remainder of our lives may be passed in peace and penitence, let us entreat the Lord.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: That the end of our lives may be Christian, without torment, blameless and peaceful and that we may have a good defence before the fearful Judgment-Seat of Christ, let us entreat.
Choir: Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: Let us who have entreated for the unity of the Faith and for the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.
Choir: To Thee, O Lord (c. 34).

The priest then offers a silent prayer ending aloud with: "... through the favour and mercy and compassion of Thine only-begotten Son, with whom Thou art glorified, with Thine all-holy, righteous and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages."

Choir: Amen.

The Celebrant introduces the Paternoster.

Priest: And deem us, O Master, worthy, with boldness and without condemnation, to dare to call upon Thee, the Heavenly God, as Father and to say:
Reader: Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
Priest: For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages.
Choir: Amen.
Priest: Peace be with you.
Choir: And with thy spirit.
Deacon: Let us bow our heads before the Lord.
Choir: To Thee, O Lord (c. 35).
Deacon: Let us attend.[1]

[1] Before the exclamation: "The Holy Things..." the Doors are closed and the curtains drawn, to symbolize that Christ is in the tomb and the seal has been put upon it.

Priest: The Holy Things for those who are Holy.
Choir: One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father. Amen (c. 36).

Here the Fraction takes place.

Deacon. (*silently*) Break, Master, the Holy Bread.
Priest: (*silently*) The Lamb of God is broken and distributed; broken but not sundered, always fed upon and never consumed but sanctifying those who partake.

The Lamb (see above, p. 3) is divided into four pieces and arranged on the Paten thus:

IC
NI KA
XC

The portion bearing the letters IC is placed in the Chalice. The officiating clergy communicate from that marked XC. The other two portions are used for the Communion of the people. Cabasilas makes no comment upon the Fraction.

A little warm water is poured into the Chalice. It is called the *zesis* and it symbolizes the gift of the Holy Spirit to the faithful in their Communion.

Deacon: Fill up, Master, the Holy Cup.
Priest: The fullness of the Cup, of Faith, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.
Deacon: Bless, Master, the warm water.
Priest: Blessed is the ardour of Thy Saints, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages.
Deacon: The ardour of Faith, of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Amen (c. 37).

The clergy now make their Communions in both kinds, separately, first from the Host and then from the Chalice.

When the clergy have communicated, the remaining Hosts are put into the Chalice, the Royal Doors are opened and the deacon and the priest emerge, and those who wish to communicate are invited to draw near.

Deacon: With the fear of God, with faith and with love draw near.

The deacon stands on the priest's left and as the communicants approach one by one they whisper their Christian names to him and he repeats them to the priest. Each is then communicated, standing with their hands crossed on their breasts, in both kinds together by means of a spoon, with the words: "The servant of God (name) is made partaker of the pure and holy Body and Blood of the Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, for the remission of his sins and unto life everlasting" (c. 39).

When all who desire to do so have communicated, the priest says: "O God, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance" (c. 40), and in modern times the choir sings at this point: "We have seen the true Light, we have received the Heavenly Spirit, we have found the True Faith by worshipping the Undivided Trinity; this hath been our salvation." Cabasilas does not refer to this anthem, possibly he did not know it. Instead he comments upon another which has disappeared from the modern Greek rite but is still heard in the Russian Liturgy. It follows the priest's exclamation, "Blessed be God always now and for ever and throughout all Ages" and is as follows: "Let our mouths be filled with Thy praise, O Lord, that we may extol Thy glory, for that Thou hast deigned to make us partakers of Thy holy, divine, immortal and life-giving mysteries. Establish us in Thy sanctification that all the day long we may meditate upon Thy righteousness. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia" (c. 41).

A THEOLOGICAL PARENTHESIS

Cabasilas's comments upon the text of the Liturgy now pause until they are taken up again in chapter 53, which continues the subject of chapters 40 and 41 and treats of the final prayers of the Liturgy. The intervening eleven chapters 42–52 discuss a number of relevant theological questions such as the sanctifying power of the holy offerings and its application to the living and the dead (cc. 42–45), the unworthiness of those who offer, and the manner of man's acceptance of the Gift (cc. 46, 47); the participation of the saints in the offering (cc. 48–50); and finally the names "reasonable

service" and "Eucharist" as applied to the service (cc. 51 and 52).

Thanksgiving and Closing Prayers
(*Commentary*, Chapter 53)

Deacon: Stand and let us who have duly received the divine, holy, pure, immortal, heavenly, life-giving and awful Mysteries of Christ, worthily give thanks unto the Lord.

Succour, save, comfort and protect us, O God, with Thy favour.

Let us who have entreated the Lord that this whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ, our God.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: For Thou art our sanctification and to Thee we ascribe the glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: In peace let us depart.

Deacon: Let us beseech the Lord.

Choir: Lord have mercy.

Priest: O Lord, Who blessest those that bless Thee and sanctifiest those that put their trust in Thee, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance; protect the whole body of Thy Church, and sanctify those who love the beauty of Thy House. Do Thou endow them with Thy divine Power and forsake not us who have set our hope in Thee. Grant peace to Thy world, to Thy Churches, to the Priesthood, to our Rulers, to the army and to all Thy people. For every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from Thee, the Father of lights; and to Thee we ascribe glory and thanks and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages (c. 53).

The antidoron is distributed as described by Cabasilas in c. 53.[1]

Choir: Amen. Blessed be the Name of the Lord, from this time forth for ever more (*thrice*).

Priest: (*silently*) O Christ, our God, Who art Thyself the Fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, and hast fulfilled all the dispensation of the Father, do Thou always fill our hearts with joy and gladness, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen.

Deacon: Let us beseech the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: May the blessing of the Lord and His mercy always come upon you through His divine favour and compassion; now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages. Glory to Thee, O our God and our Hope, glory to Thee.

Reader: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; both now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy (*thrice*).

Holy Father, give the blessing.

Priest: May Christ, our true God (Who rose from the dead), have mercy upon us, through the intercessions of His most pure and Holy Mother; through the virtue of the precious and life-giving Cross; through the protection of the precious Spiritual Powers in Heaven; through the supplications of the precious glorious Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist; of the holy, glorious and honourable Apostles; of the holy, glorious and victorious Martyrs; of our saintly and holy Fathers; of the

[1] The antidoron is taken from what is left of the bread after the portion which is to be consecrated has been cut out (see p. 5). If any bread is still left it becomes the property of the parish priest.

Antidoron means literally "instead of the gift" and is received by the people with much reverence. They feel that although they may not have made their Communion, yet the antidoron expresses their fellowship with the rest of the worshipping body of the Church. Like the *pain bénit* of the West, the antidoron is generally accepted as a relic of the primitive *agape*.

holy and righteous divine ancestors Joachim and Anna; of Saint (*of the day*), whose memory we celebrate, and of all the Saints, and may Christ save us through His goodness and compassion as our Merciful God.

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers have mercy upon us, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God (c. 53).

Choir: Amen.

COMMENTARY ON THE DIVINE LITURGY

I

INTRODUCTION AND THE PROTHESIS

1. *The general significance of the sacrifice*

The essential act in the celebration of the holy mysteries is the transformation of the elements into the Divine Body and Blood; its aim is the sanctification of the faithful, who through these mysteries receive the remission of their sins and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. As a preparation for, and contribution to, this act and this purpose we have prayers, psalms, and readings from Holy Scripture; in short, all the sacred acts and forms which are said and done before and after the consecration of the elements. While it is true that God freely gives us all holy things and that we bring him nothing, but that they are absolute graces, he does nevertheless necessarily require that we should be fit to receive and to preserve them; and he would not permit those who were not so disposed to be thus sanctified. It is in this way that he admits us to Baptism and Confirmation; in this way that he receives us at the divine banquet and allows us to participate at the solemn table. Christ, in his parable of the sower, has illustrated this way that God has of dealing with us. "A sower went forth," he says, "to sow"[1]—not to plough the earth, but to *sow*: thus showing that the work of preparation must be done by us. Therefore, since in order to obtain the effects of the divine mysteries we must approach them in a state of grace and properly prepared, it was necessary that these preparations should find a place in the order of the sacred rite: and, in fact, they are found there. There, indeed, we see what the prayers and psalms, as well as the

[1] Matt. 13.3.

sacred actions and forms which the liturgy contains, can achieve in us. They purify us and make us able fittingly to receive and to preserve holiness, and to remain possessed of it.

They sanctify us in two ways. The first consists in this: that we are helped by these prayers, psalms, and readings. The prayers turn us towards God and obtain for us pardon for our sins; the psalms make God look favourably upon us, and draw to us that outflowing of mercy which is the result of such propitiation. "Offer unto God thanksgiving", says the Psalmist, "and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."[1] As for the lessons from the Holy Scripture, which proclaim the goodness of God, and his love for men, but also the severity of his justice and judgement, they instil in our souls the fear of the Lord, enkindle in us love for him, and thereby arouse in us great eagerness and zeal for the observance of his commandments. All these things, which make the souls of both priest and people better and more divine, make them fit for the reception and preservation of the holy mysteries, which is the aim of the liturgy. Especially, they put the priest in a proper frame of mind for the accomplishment of the sacrifice, which is, as has been said, the essential part of the mystagogy. This intention can be seen in many parts of the prayers: the priest prays that he be not judged unworthy to perform so great an act, but that he may devote himself to the sacrifice with pure hands, a pure heart, and a pure tongue. Thus it is that we are aided in the celebration by the very virtue of the words themselves, said or sung.

There is another way in which these forms, like all the ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice, sanctify us. It consists in this: that in them Christ and the deeds he accomplished and the sufferings he endured for our sakes are represented. Indeed, it is the whole scheme of the work of redemption which is signified in the psalms and readings, as in all the actions of the priest throughout the liturgy; the first ceremonies of the service represent the beginnings of this work; the next, the sequel; and the last, its results. Thus, those who are present at these ceremonies have before their eyes all these divine

[1] Ps. 50.14,15.

things. The consecration of the elements—the sacrifice itself—commemorates the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Saviour, since it transforms these precious gifts into the very Body of the Lord, that Body which was the central figure in all these mysteries, which was crucified, which rose from the dead, which ascended into heaven. The ceremonies which precede the act of sacrifice symbolize the events which occurred before the death of Christ: his coming on earth, his first appearance and his perfect manifestation. Those which follow the act of sacrifice recall "the promise of the Father",[1] as the Saviour himself called it: that is, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, the conversion of the nations which they brought about, and their divine society. The whole celebration of the mystery is like a unique portrayal of a single body, which is the work of the Saviour; it places before us the several members of this body, from beginning to end, in their order and harmony. That is why the psalmody, as well as the opening chants, and before them all that is done at the preparation of the offerings, symbolize the first period of the scheme of redemption. That which comes after the psalms—readings from Holy Scriptures and so on—symbolizes the period which follows.

Even if one maintains that the readings and psalms serve another purpose—for they were introduced in order to dispose us to virtue and to cause God to look favourably on us—that does not mean that the same ceremonies cannot at once urge us to virtue and illustrate the scheme of Christ's redemptive work. Robes fulfil their function as clothes, and cover the body; but sometimes, by their style, they indicate the profession, rank, and dignity of the wearer. The same is true of these liturgical matters. Because the Holy Scriptures contain divinely-inspired words and praises of God, and because they incite to virtue, they sanctify those who read or chant them. But, because of the selection which has been made, and the order in which the passages are arranged, they have another function: they signify the coming of Christ and his work. Not only the chants and readings but the very actions themselves have this part to play; each has its own

[1] Luke 24.49; Acts 1.4.

immediate purpose and usefulness. But at the same time each symbolizes some part of the works of Christ, his deeds or his sufferings. For example, we have the bringing of the Gospel to the altar, then the bringing of the offerings. Each is done for a purpose, the one that the Gospel may be read, the other that the sacrifice may be performed; besides this, however, one represents the appearance and the other the manifestation of the Saviour; the first, obscure and imperfect, at the beginning of his life; the second, the perfect and supreme manifestation. There are even certain ceremonies which fulfil no practical purpose, but have only a figurative meaning; such as the action of piercing the Host, and tracing thereon the pattern of a cross, or again the fact that the metal instrument used for this perforation is shaped like a lance; there is also the ceremony which takes place near the end, of mixing a little warm water with the wine.[1]

One finds many things of this kind in the other sacraments also. Thus, in Baptism, the candidates must remove their shoes and clothing; then, with their eyes turned to the West, they must stretch forth their hands and exhale. Now these ceremonies have no other aim than to teach us the hatred which we must have for the devil, and how he must be driven away by anyone who wishes to be a true Christian. And if there are other ceremonies of this kind in the sacraments, they have a similar meaning.

As far as the ceremonies performed in the eucharistic liturgy are concerned, they all have some connection with the scheme of the work of redemption. Their purpose is to set before us the Divine plan, that by looking upon it our souls may be sanctified, and thus we may be made fit to receive these sacred gifts. Just as the work of redemption, when it was first achieved, restored the world, so now, when it is ever before our eyes, it makes the souls of those who behold it better and more divine. I say more: it would not even have been of any use if it had not been an object of contemplation and of faith. That is why it was preached; that is why God, in order to give men faith in it, has had recourse to a thousand miracles. It could not have fulfilled its task and saved

[1] See below, p. 90.

mankind if, even after it had been performed, it had remained unknown to those whom it should have saved. But when it was preached it created in those men of graceless soul who previously knew it not, a veneration for Christ and a faith and love which did not exist there before. To-day, contemplated with ardour by those who already have faith, it naturally does not *induce* these noble sentiments, but it preserves, renews, and increases what already exists; it makes the believers stronger in faith and more generous in devotion and love. If it could arouse these sentiments where before they did not exist, how much more easily can it preserve, maintain, and renew them. Now these are the dispositions which we must have when we approach the holy mysteries, and without which it would be impious even to look upon them: reverence, faith, and a fervent love of God.

That is why it was necessary that actions of this sort, capable of inspiring such feelings in us, should find a place in the ordering of the liturgy. It was necessary, not only that we should think about, but also that to some extent we should *see* the utter poverty of him who possesses all, the coming on earth of him who dwells everywhere, the shame of the most blessed God, the sufferings of the impassible; that we should see how much he was hated and how much he loved; how he, the Most High, humbled himself; what torments he endured, what deeds he accomplished in order to prepare for us this holy table. Thus, in beholding the unutterable freshness of the work of salvation, amazed by the abundance of God's mercy, we are brought to venerate him who had such compassion for us, who saved us at so great a price: to entrust our souls to him, to dedicate our lives to him, to enkindle in our hearts the flame of his love. Thus prepared, we can enter into contact with the fire of the solemn mysteries with confidence and trust.

Indeed, in order to put ourselves in this state of mind it is not enough once to have learned of those things which are Christ's and to have retained the memory of them; we must at this moment behold and contemplate these things with the eyes of the mind, striving to banish all alien thoughts; that is, if we truly wish to acquire that fitness of soul (of

which I have spoken) which makes us worthy of sanctification. In vain do we bear in mind the reverence due to the holy mysteries in order to be able to answer any question which we are asked about it; if at the time of the celebration we do not concentrate upon these things, if our minds are distracted, such knowledge is not of the slightest use to us; that alone cannot inspire in us the dispositions previously mentioned. For our dispositions are regulated by the thoughts which occupy us at the time, and the feelings we experience are those which such thoughts are calculated to arouse in us.

This is why the symbolism of which I have spoken was conceived. It does not confine itself to the indication of all this by words alone, but it places it before our eyes in its entirety throughout the liturgy. The aim of setting all this before us is to influence our souls the more easily thereby; not merely to offer us a simple picture but to create in us a feeling; for the very good reason that an idea is more deeply impressed upon us if we can see it depicted. This goes on throughout the liturgy, in order that it may not be forgotten, and our thoughts be not distracted by anything else before it has led us to the holy table. Filled with these ideas, and with their memory fresh within us, we receive Communion. In this way, adding sanctification to sanctification, that of the sacred rite to that of the meditations, "We are changed from glory to glory",[1] that is to say, from the lesser to that which is greatest of all.

This, in short, is the significance of the liturgy as a whole. Now we shall consider it more closely, and as far as possible in detail. First the preparatory prayers, the blessings and sacred chants, and the readings; then the most sacred act, the sacrifice itself; finally the sanctification by which the souls of Christians, living and dead, benefit through this sacrifice. The chants and prayers of priest and people, which have their place within this framework, will also be considered in so far as they require examination and explanation. But, above all and in all, the plan of the work of redemption, which is symbolized throughout the ceremony: we are about to dis-

[1] 2 Cor. 3.18.

cover which aspects of this Divine scheme are represented by the several ceremonies of the liturgy.

2. *Why the offerings are not placed upon the altar at once*

Let us begin by considering the ceremonies and forms of the preparation, those of the presentation itself and those of the offering.

Why are the elements not brought to the altar immediately and sacrificed? Why are they first dedicated to God as gifts?

It is because under the Old Law there were several types of sacrifice: they sacrificed to God the blood of brute beasts; they also offered him gifts, such as vessels of gold and silver. Now the body of Christ clearly belongs to both these types. At the end of his mortal life he became a victim when he was sacrificed to give glory to his Father. Also, he was dedicated to God from the beginning; in the eyes of the Father he was a precious gift: he was acceptable both as first fruit of the human race, and also by reason of the Law, because he was the firstborn.

That is why the oblations, which represent the body of Christ, are not immediately taken to the altar and sacrificed. The sacrifice comes at the end. They are dedicated first; they are precious gifts offered to God, and they are described as such. Besides, this is what Christ himself did at the Last Supper when, having taken the bread and wine into his Divine hands, he dedicated them to his Father in offering them to him. And how do we know this? By what the Church does, and because she calls the elements gifts. For she would not do this if she did not know that Christ had done it. She heard his command: "Do this," and she could only follow his example.

3. *The oblations are dedicated to God as first fruits of human life*

Why do the oblations take this particular form?

The ancients offered the first fruits of their crops, their flocks of sheep or cattle, or other goods. We set aside for God,

as first fruits of our life, these gifts of human food, whose purpose is to sustain the life of our bodies; especially because life is not only maintained by food, but also symbolized by it. The Apostles said of Christ: "We ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead"[1] to prove that they really saw him alive. And the Lord himself ordered them to give the woman whom he had raised from the dead something to eat, in order to prove the presence of life by means of food. Therefore it is natural to consider food as the first fruit of life itself.

But you will say, perhaps, that all that was offered to God of old could be used as food by men; they offered fruit for which the farmers laboured, and edible animals. Were these then first fruits of human life?

By no means: for none of these foods is proper to the human race, but nourishment shared by all creatures, fruits being the particular food of birds and grazing animals, while flesh is that of the carnivores. We call human that which belongs to man alone. Now the need of baking bread and making wine to drink is peculiar to man.

That is why we offer bread and wine.

4. *Why should we offer the first fruits of human life?*

For what reason must we offer these oblations to God as first fruits of human life?

The reason is that God gives us life in exchange for these gifts. Now it is fitting that the gift should have something in common with the reward, and not be utterly removed from it. Since the reward is life, then the offering should to some extent be life also; especially since he who prescribes the gift is also the Giver of Life, the just Judge who weighs all things.[2] It is he who commands us to offer bread and wine; it is he who gives us in return the Living Bread, the chalice of eternal life. Just as he gave the Apostles fish for fish, making the fishermen fishers of men; just as he promised to give the young man who asked him about the kingdom the treasures of heaven in exchange for earthly riches; so here he commands those to whom he would give eternal life (that is, his life-giving Body and Blood) to offer the food of our fleeting mortal life: so that we may receive life for life, eternity for temporality; so that what is a grace may seem to be an exchange, so that infinite generosity may have the appearance of justice; and thus the word may be fulfilled: "I will set my mercy in the balance."

[1] Acts 10.41. [2] Isa. 28.17. Wisd. 11.20,21.

This is so, not only in this sacrament, but also in Baptism. There we exchange life for life; we give one and receive another in its place. But, whereas our gift of life is but a figure and symbol of death, our resurrection is truly life. For the Saviour who died and rose again desired that we should share in his new life, and he ordained that we ourselves should offer to him some part of this great gift. What is our offering? An imitation of his death. In what way do we imitate it? By burying our bodies in water as though in the grave, and by emerging thrice: this indicates that Christ, having made us partakers in his death and burial, will vouchsafe to admit us to a share in his new life.

5. *Why all the bread is not offered, but only a part of it*

Another point must be made clear, i.e. the reason why not all the loaves offered are consecrated to God and afterwards borne to the altar for sacrifice, but only that part which the priest cuts off.

Here again the offering up of Christ takes on a special character. In the case of other offerings, those to whom they belonged would select them from among other things of the same kind, take them to the temple and deliver them into the hands of the priests. The priests received, dedicated, and sacrificed them, or disposed of each offering as was proper.

But it is Christ himself, in his capacity as priest, who set apart the Body of the Lord, offered it up, took it to himself and consecrated it to God, and who sacrificed it. It is the Son of God in person who separated himself from the mass of humankind; it is he who has offered himself to God. He placed this offering in his Father's bosom, he who, while never absent from that bosom, created this body here below and

clothed himself with it, in such wise that it was given to God as soon as it was made. And finally, it was Christ himself who bore this body to the Cross and sacrificed it.

That is why the bread which is to be changed into his body is separated from the rest of the loaves by the priest, who places it on the holy paten and consecrates[1] it to God; then he carries it to the altar and offers it up in sacrifice.

6. *Why the priest marks the bread with the symbols of Christ's Passion*

As long as it remains in the *prothesis*[2] the bread thus separated from the rest is still only bread. But it has acquired a new characteristic—it is dedicated to God; it has become an offering, since it represents our Lord during the first phase of his life on earth, when he became an oblation. Now this happened at the moment of his birth, as has been said, for, as the first-born, he was offered up from birth, in accordance with the Law. But the pains which Christ endured afterwards for our salvation, his Cross and Death, had been symbolized beforehand in the Old Testament. That is why the priest marks the loaf with these symbols before carrying it to the altar and sacrificing it. How does he do this? When he takes it from the other loaves and offers it up, he engraves upon it, as if on a tablet, the emblems of the passion and death of our Saviour. All his actions, those dictated by necessity as well as those which are consciously symbolic, are made to fit into this framework; thus they are all, as it were, a dramatization of Christ's sufferings and death.

This practice of demonstrating, exhorting or prophesying by means of actions is very ancient. The prophet who wished to foretell the Jews' captivity bound himself.[3] Later, Agabus acted in the same way, symbolizing St Paul's imprisonment.[4] And we are told of one of the divinely inspired Fathers that when he was asked what a monk was, he made no reply, but

[1] I.e. sets it apart as holy and for the divine use. Cabasilas uses the word "change" for our "consecrate" in the narrower sense of consecrating the bread and wine for communion.
[2] See above, p. 3. [3] Ezek. 3.25; 4.8. [4] Acts 21.10.

removed his cloak and trampled it underfoot. Indeed the very death of the Lord, and the whole divine plan, was foretold by the prophets of old, not only in words, but also by deeds, for it was thus that God imparted knowledge to them. So, the waves of the sea divided by the rod of Moses,[1] the burning bush that was not consumed,[2] Isaac who was led to sacrifice by his father,[3] and many other figures were symbols of the great mystery from the very earliest times.

In the same way, the priest expresses in words or represents by his gestures all that he knows of the solemn sacrifice, as far as he can with the means at his disposal. Thus he shows how the Lord began his Passion, how he died, how his side was pierced with a lance, and how, as the Gospel tells us, blood and water flowed from the wound. The aim of these ceremonies is in the first place, as I have shown, to remind us that, just as the priest marks the bread with the emblems of sacrifice before carrying it to the altar and offering it up, so these Divine happenings were themselves heralded and signified to us beforehand by types and figures. Secondly, they show that this bread is, as it were, eager to be transformed into that true Bread which is Christ crucified and sacrificed. Finally, since we are calling to mind the death of the Lord, their purpose is to ensure that no means of presentation is omitted in the endeavour to express the meaning of this happening, which the voices of a thousand throats could not adequately make clear; the priest does what he can both in word and in action.

7. *The commemoration of the Lord*

First of all, holding the bread from which the sacred Host is to be taken, the priest says: "In memory of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Thereby he obeys his command, for he said: "Do this in remembrance of me."[4] These words pronounced by the priest apply not only to the bread but to the whole liturgy; he begins with this commemoration and ends with it. For it was after our Lord had fully

[1] Ex. 14. 16–22. [2] Ex. 3. 2–3. [3] Gen. 22.
[4] Luke 22.19.

completed the mystery that he pronounced the words: "Do this in remembrance of me."

What is this commemoration? How do we remember the Lord in our liturgy? Which of his actions, which stages of his life, are called to mind? In other words, what are we to recall concerning him and his life? That he raised the dead, that he gave sight to the blind, that he ruled the tempests, that he fed thousands with a few loaves, thus showing himself to be God Almighty? By no means. Rather, we must remember those events which seem to denote nothing but weakness: his Cross, his Passion, his Death—these are the happenings which he asks us to commemorate. And how can we know this? It is the interpretation of St Paul, who understood so well all that concerns Christ.

For when he wrote to the Corinthians about this mystery, after relating the words of the Lord, "Do this in remembrance of me", he added: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."[1] And our Lord himself laid stress on this aspect when he instituted the solemn sacrament. When he had said, "This is my Body", "This is my Blood", he did not refer his disciples to his miracles, saying, "I raised the dead" or "I healed lepers", but he spoke only of his Passion and Death, saying, "Which is broken for you"; "which is shed for you".

Why then does he remind us not of his miracles but of his sufferings? It is because the latter are so much more necessary than the former. His Passion is the very cause of our salvation, and without it mankind could not have been redeemed; the miracles, on the other hand, served merely as demonstrations; they were wrought that men might have faith in Jesus as the true Saviour.

8. *Ceremonies performed with the bread*

Because it is fitting that we should commemorate the Lord in this way, the priest, after having said the words, "In memory of our Lord", performs ceremonies which symbolize the Cross and Death of Christ. While making an incision in

[1] 1 Cor. 11.26.

the loaf he calls to mind what the prophet of old said of the Saviour's passion: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter."[1] He expresses this and the rest of the passage to the best of his ability, both in word and in action. This cutting of the loaf is done for practical reasons—that the Host may be removed —but it has a symbolic value also; it represents our Lord's passing from the world by the road which leads to his Father —death, which he overcame; as he himself said, "I leave the world, and go to the Father."[2]

As the priest thrusts the lance into the loaf several times in making the incisions, so also he divides the words of the Prophet into a corresponding number of sections, combining the different parts with the several strokes of the lance, to show that the action is an application of the word. In the same way that this bread has been separated from other and similar loaves in order that it may be consecrated to God and used in the Holy Sacrifice, so the Lord was set apart from the mass of mankind, whose nature his love had brought him to share. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter", and in this way "he was cut off out of the land of the living".[3] And the priest adds the remainder of the passage from the prophet.

Then, placing the Host on the paten, he pronounces words and performs actions which are a direct recollection of the sacrifice and death of our Saviour. "The Lamb of God is sacrificed, he who taketh away the sins of the world." Both the words and the rites show forth the circumstances of Christ's death. The priest carves a cross on the bread, thereby signifying the means by which the sacrifice was accomplished. Then he pierces the right side of the Host; this incision in the bread represents the wound in the Saviour's side. That is why the small metal knife is called a lance and is shaped like one. While the priest recalls these events in this way he repeats the words of the Evangelist: "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side."[4] The blood and water which flowed from his holy side are also recalled by the priest, who symbolizes them by pouring wine and water into the chalice—

[1] Isa. 53.7. [2] John 16.28. [3] Isa. 53.7,8. [4] John 19.34.

another commemoration of the Lord—and saying the words: "And forthwith came there out blood and water."[1]

9. *Why did the Lord command us to do this in memory of him?*

What was his reason for giving us this command; what was his aim in asking us to commemorate him thus? In order that we might not be ungrateful and forgetful. Now those with a debt of gratitude can in a way repay their benefactors by preserving their memory and that of the favours they have received from them. Mankind has invented several such aids to memory: funeral monuments, statues, pillars, festivals, assemblies, public games; they all have but one purpose—to prevent the memory of great and good men from falling into oblivion.

The Saviour did likewise. He says: "Men seek all sorts of remedies against forgetfulness, in order to preserve the memory of their benefactors. Do this in memory of me." Cities have inscribed on the pillars commemorating their heroes the names of the victories by which they were saved, or which brought them increased prosperity; in the same way we inscribe on our offerings the death of the Lord, which won a complete victory over the powers of darkness. In their statues, cities have mere representations of their benefactors; but in this offering we possess, not the image of our Master, but the very body and blood of him who bore himself so bravely.

The Old Testament thus fulfilled in symbol what Christ has now ordained in actual fact. There was, for example, the Passover, the sacrifice of the lamb, in remembrance of the slaying of the sheep whose blood preserved the lives of the first-born of the Hebrews in Egypt.

This then is the purpose of the commemoration.

10. *The words of the offering after the commemoration. The offering of the gifts is both in thanksgiving and in supplication*

The priest continues to make the offering. He takes a piece

[1] John 19.34.

of each of the loaves offered and makes the holy gift. But he does not repeat the same words and actions whereby at the beginning the death of the Lord has already been symbolized, since what has been once said is considered to hold good for the whole service. For the whole of the offertory is made in memory of the Lord, and his death is called to mind throughout. The words which he now says are: "To the glory of the all-holy Mother of God, in honour of such and such a saint, and for the remission of the sins of the living and the dead."

And what does this imply? That the reasons for offering the gifts are these: to give thanks to God, and to make supplication. Thus it is written: No gift is made without cause, whether it is a question of worshipping God or of pleasing men, but always some benefit is held in mind, whether it be one already received or merely one which is hoped for. For by our gifts we are either showing our gratitude to a benefactor for what we have received already, or we pay homage to someone who can bestow favours on us but has not already done so. In our offering of these gifts to God, both motives are combined; we offer them both because of what we have received already and in order that we may receive yet more, in thanksgiving and in supplication; we thank him for the good things received and ask him for those blessings yet to come. So the same gifts are at once thank-offerings and supplicatory.

What are the benefits bestowed upon us, and what do we still seek? They are the same in each case—the forgiveness of our sins and the inheritance of the kingdom. For these are the things which Christ commanded us to seek first of all; it is these benefits which the Church has already received and for which she still prays. In what way does she already possess these good things, and in what sense has she not yet received them, so that she must pray for them? She obtained the first of these gifts when she became capable of possessing them. For she has received the power to make us children of God[1]: this is the gift common to all Christians which the death of our Saviour bestowed upon us. This power is contained in Holy Baptism and in the other sacraments, whereby we are

[1] John 1.12.

made children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Secondly, she has already shared in the heritage of this kingdom in actual fact, through the thousands of her members whom she has sent to their heavenly home, and whom St Paul calls "the firstborn, who are written in heaven."[1] It is in this way that the Church has already received of these great gifts. But for those of her children who are living in the world and still running the race to gain the crown,[2] for whom the result is uncertain, and for those who have passed away without sure and certain hope the kingdom has yet to be obtained.

This is why she commemorates the Lord's death and the departed saints for whom she has obtained the fullness of perfection; she is mindful also of those who are not yet perfect. For the former she gives thanks, and for the rest she intercedes.

Thus the first and second parts of the *prothesis*[3] are spent in thanksgiving, while the remainder is concerned with supplication; in memory of the Lord, for the glory of his Blessed Mother, and in honour of the saints. "We give thanks to thee," says the Church, "that by thy death thou hast opened for us the gates of life, that from us thou didst choose a mother, that we have as ambassadors our fellow-men, and that thou hast allowed to members of our human family such freedom of access to thee."

For the words "to the glory" and "through the intercession" mean the same as "because of the glory and the intercession", just as "for the remission of sins" means "because of the remission of sins". These words have a double meaning, for they apply both to the present and to that for which we hope in the future. Who would deny that the glory of the Blessed Virgin and the intercession of the saints and their freedom of access to God are present benefits? And to offer gifts for benefits already received is clearly an act of thanksgiving. As for the words "in memory of the Lord", they, as we have already shown, symbolize an attempt at repayment for his death, and are a sign of thanksgiving. Thus the aim of these

[1] Heb. 12.23. [2] 1 Cor. 9.24; Phil. 3.14.
[3] See above, p. 3.

words in the offertory is to stress the point that for us his death was the source of all good things.

The supplication which seeks the remission of sins, the repose of souls and like benefits comes last of all. For it is of the very nature of gratitude that we should refrain from mentioning our needs or asking for what we lack until, remembering what we have already received, we have first given thanks to God and praised him, thus setting his glory above our own desires.

11. *The reason why the gifts are covered, and the words which are said*

The words and actions performed over the bread which signify the death of the Lord are only a description and a symbol. The bread therefore remains bread and has received no more than the capacity to be offered to God. This is why it typifies the Lord's body in his early years, for, as we have already pointed out, he himself was an offering from his birth onwards. This is why the priest relates, and represents over the bread, the miracles accomplished in him when he was but new-born and still lying in the manger. Placing what is known as the *asterisk*[1] over it, he says: "And lo, the star stood over where the child was."[2] Then he goes on to recite the agelong prophecies about him as God, so that the lowliness of the flesh and outward appearance shall not lead men to form a wrong conception of him, unworthy of his Divinity. "At the word of the Lord the heavens were established.[3] The Lord reigned, clothed in beauty",[4] and "his virtue covers the heavens and the earth is full of his understanding". While he is saying these words, the priest covers the gifts, that is the bread and the chalice, with fine veils, and censes them on all sides. Thus the power of the Incarnate God was veiled up to the time of his miracles and the witness from heaven. But those who know say of him: "The Lord hath reigned, clothed in beauty", and the other passages which imply his Divinity. "And they knew him and worshipped him as

[1] See above, p. 3. [2] Matt. 2.9. [3] Ps. 33.6.
[4] Ps. 93.1.

God and sought refuge with him." And the priest implies this when he covers the gifts and says: "Cover us in the shadow of thy wings",[1] and censes on all sides. When he has said these words and completed the rite and has prayed that all of the holy liturgy may be accomplished according to his intentions, he comes to the altar, and standing before it begins the liturgy.

[1] Ps. 17.8.

II

THE LITURGY OF THE CATECHUMENS

12. *The opening doxology*

First of all every holy rite begins with the doxology: Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Intercourse with God consists of thanksgiving, doxology, confession, and petition. The first of these is doxology, because when grateful servants approach their Master it is fitting that they should begin not by pushing their own affairs into the foreground, but should concentrate on those of their Master. Such is the nature of doxology. In petitioning we have in mind the advancement of our own interests. In confessing we seek to be delivered from evils, and accuse ourselves. In giving thanks we clearly rejoice in the good things which we enjoy. But in doxology we lay aside ourselves and all our interests and glorify the Lord for his own sake, for his power and his glory. And so the very nature and the appropriateness of the act demand that the doxology should come first. Immediately we approach God we recognize the inaccessibility and force and grandeur of his glory, and are filled with wonder and awe and similar feelings. This is indeed doxology. We go on to recognize his goodness and love for mankind, and this gives rise to thanksgiving. Then we consider his exceeding goodness and the liberality of his love for mankind, counting our own wickedness as the first and sufficient proof of that generosity and liberality, for whatever our shortcomings he continues to crown us with blessings. This is something which is near at hand within us, before our very eyes, and it proves to us more than anything else

how much God loves mankind. And so we remember our sins before God, and this is called confession. The fourth element is petition. It follows that we can be confident that our requests for our needs will be granted, for we have just learned something of God's goodness and his love for mankind. He who has been good to those who were still sinners will surely be more so to those who have repented, and have become righteous by avowing their sins, according to the words of the prophet: "First confess your sins in order that you may be justified."

Thus doxology has first place in any intercourse with God, and it is for this reason that the priest glorifies God before any prayer or sacred homily. But why does he glorify the threefold nature of God and not his unity? For he does not say "Blessed be God" or "Blessed be the Kingdom", but distinguishes between the Persons. "Blessed be the kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." It is because it was through the Incarnation of the Lord that mankind first learned that God was three Persons, and the mystery which is being performed is centred in the Incarnation of the Lord, so that from the very beginning the Trinity must shine forth and be proclaimed.

After the doxology comes the petition, in the words: "In peace let us pray to the Lord." For "we know not what we should pray for as we ought",[1] and to prevent us from saying vain words,[2] we are taught what is necessary for prayer. First of all, the way must be "in peace". Why are we told to make our petitions immediately after the doxology, and before we have made confession or given thanks? It is because if the question is carefully examined it is clear that both of these are also included when "the peace" (the *irenikon*)[3] is said. The man who is discontented with his lot in life cannot have peace within him, but only he who is grateful and "in every thing gives thanks"[4] according to the teaching of the blessed Paul. Nor will he have a pure understanding, for a pure understanding is impossible without confession. So that he who prays in peace must first have a thankful and confessed

[1] Rom. 8.26. [2] Matt. 6.7. [3] See above, p. 5. [4] 1 Thess. 5.18.

soul. And further, the very petition which they make shows them to be in a state of thankfulness and confession. For their petition is for mercy. This is indeed the supplication of the condemned who have no possible defence and no justification to put forward; they make this one last appeal to the judge, counting on obtaining what they ask not because it is just but because of his love for mankind. These people in fact bear witness to the judge of his great goodness and mercy and to themselves of their own iniquity; the first is an act of gratitude and the second one of confession.

At the beginning the priest exhorts the people to prayer, for he is appointed to this office and is for this reason placed in front of the people. He is also there as their representative and mediator, so that his prayer may be very efficacious, as the apostle James says: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."[1] At the same time those for whom he is making supplication contribute all they can, by their good behaviour, prayers, gentleness, and justice, and anything else which they know to be pleasing to God.

What is the first petition? For peace from on high and the salvation of our souls. When we have learned how we should approach prayer, we are then taught what we should ask for first of all; that is to say, peace from on high and the salvation of our souls, for thus Christ commanded, saying: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."[2] "The salvation of our souls" means "the kingdom" and the "peace from on high" signifies the righteousness of God, of which St Paul says "the peace of God passeth all understanding."[3] This peace the Lord left to the Apostles when he ascended to the Father. "Peace I leave with you," he said, "my peace I give unto you."[4] And in the same way that the word "righteousness" implies more than a strict legality, meaning every kind of virtue, so the word "peace" has a wider implication for it is the fruit of all good and all wisdom. No one is in possession of perfect peace if he lacks any of the virtues, and he who desires to attain this peace can only reach it through them all. We must first strive for the peace which

[1] James 5.16. [2] Matt. 6.33. [3] Phil. 4.7. [4] John 14.27.

is possible among men and then ask God for his peace as is necessary for each virtue. For there is a moderation which is acquired by asceticism, and there is a moderation which is given to the soul by God. The same is true of love, prayer, wisdom and all the rest. This is why the priest speaks first of the peace which comes from us and is within our power, and then after this commands us to make our petitions to God, telling us about the peace given by God and exhorting us to seek it, saying: "Let us petition for virtue from on high." When he says "peace" he does not only mean that we shall be at peace with each other and not bear any ill-will, but that we shall be at peace with ourselves so that we are not condemned by our own hearts. This is indeed a great benefit; it is above all essential to our well-being. For because of the very nature of agitation the troubled mind is quite powerless to approach God. Peace establishes unity among many, but agitation divides one into many, and how could an individual so disturbed be united to the One and Indivisible God? Therefore he who is not at peace cannot pray aright, and cannot expect any good to come of his prayer. If anger disturbs his soul or if ill-feeling has driven out peace, his prayer will not obtain forgiveness of his sins, and still less will he receive any other grace. If his conscience pricks him because of his sins and he is agitated by self-accusation and misgivings he will be deprived of confidence in God according to the saying "And when he prays, he prays without confidence", that is, without faith, and the man who prays without faith prays in vain and to no purpose. That is why we are commanded to pray to God in peace, and above all to ask for the peace from above.

When we have this approach, we can make petitions in charity for others, not only for the Church and the rulers of the empire and those in danger and trouble and adversity, but indeed for all mankind throughout the world. "Let us pray for the peace of the whole world", says the priest; especially since Christians know that their God is common Lord of all, and that all things are in his care, since he made them, and if any man concerns himself with their welfare he honours God more than if he had offered him sacrifice.[1]

[1] Matt. 9.13; 12.7. Hosea 6.6.

And then, according to the blessed Paul, we pray thus in order that we ourselves, surrounded by peace, "may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."[1] And we do not ask only for the things of the spirit, but also for those material benefits which we require, for healthful air and an abundance of the fruits of the earth, in order that we may recognize God as Creator and Provider of all things and may look always to him; for Christ himself commanded us to ask of God even our daily bread, as well as all the other things.

13. *The meaning of the prayer for God's mercy after every petition*

There is another question to be asked: why is it that, whereas the priest asks them to pray for so many different things, the faithful in fact ask for one thing only—mercy? Why is this the sole cry they send forth to God?

In the first place, as we have already said, it is because this prayer implies both gratitude and confession. Secondly, to beg God's mercy is to ask for his kingdom, that kingdom which Christ promised to give to those who seek for it, assuring them that all things else of which they have need will be added unto them.[2] Because of this, this prayer is sufficient for the faithful, since its application is general.

How do we know that the kingdom of God is signified by his mercy? In this way: Christ, speaking of the reward of the merciful, and of the recompense of kindness which they will receive from him, in one place says that they shall obtain mercy, and in another that they shall inherit the kingdom; thus proving that God's mercy and the inheritance of the kingdom are one and the same thing. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy",[3] he says. And elsewhere, as if to explain himself and to show what it means to obtain mercy, he declares: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand (by whom he means the merciful): Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."[4]

[1] 1 Tim. 2.2. [2] Matt. 6.33. [3] Matt. 5.7.
[4] Matt. 25.34.

Moreover, if, among the actions of merciful men, one wishes to contemplate the aim of the divine mercy, he will find that it corresponds exactly to the kingdom itself. For what is the character of the merciful man? "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink."[1] Therefore those to whom Christ shows mercy he will admit to a share at his own table. And what table is this? "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom."[2] And that you may know the splendour of that table, and may realize that it is a table not of servants but of kings, know that he who waits upon it is Lord of all. "He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."[3]

Likewise, if I may recall that other saying: "I was naked and ye clothed me",[4] the Lord will clothe him to whom he shows mercy. And will he not give him a royal garment? He will clothe him in his own garments; and nothing of his is base, for he is a king—just as nothing of ours is royal, since we are slaves. This garment is the wedding-robe which will ensure for those who wear it admission to the kingdom; the King will find in its wearers no fault for which they can be cast forth from the marriage-chamber.

What more? He will open his doors to them and lead them into his house to rest. "I was a stranger, and you took me in."[5] Those who have been counted worthy of such favour are servants no longer, but sons of God. "The servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth forever."[6] Now the sons are heirs not only of the kingdom but of him who is the heart of the kingdom. "Heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ",[7] says St Paul.

That is why, in asking Christ for mercy, we are asking that we may obtain the kingdom.

14. *The commendation*

After he has prayed for all his intentions, the priest calls upon the faithful to commend themselves to God, saying to

[1] Matt. 25.35. [2] Luke 22.30. [3] Luke 12.37.
[4] Matt. 25.36. [5] Matt. 25.35. [6] John 8.35.
[7] Rom. 8.17.

them: "Having commemorated her who is all-holy, immaculate and blessed above all, our glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever virgin Mary, and all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and each other and our whole lives to Christ, and place them in his keeping."

It is not given to all to commend themselves to God and to place themselves in his care. For the words of commendation are not in themselves enough; it is necessary that God should accept us. It is essential that we have assurance (of this acceptance), and that only comes from a clear conscience; such a conscience as we have when our own heart does not reproach us, when we concern ourselves with the things of God, when, in order to care for his interests, we do not hesitate to neglect our own. For then we abandon all anxiety for our own affairs, confidently committing them into God's hands, in the sure and certain faith that he will accept our trust and will preserve it.

Since this matter requires so much wisdom and thought, we do not make this commendation until we have first summoned to our aid the all-holy Mother of God and the choir of all the saints and also sought for unity of faith and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. After this we commend ourselves and our lives to God to be placed in his keeping.

What is unity of faith? "A double-minded man is inconstant in all his ways"[1]—the double-minded man being he who is doubtful and has no certainty or stability. Such a man, wavering from one side to the other, does not go straight forward upon either road. The opposite of this unhappy state is unity, namely, that which is strong, constant, and stable. He who is steadfast in faith has definite knowledge concerning any particular matter—either that it is, or that it is not. The doubter, on the other hand, is shown by his very title—*amphibolos*—to waver between the two. The unity of the faith is, then, that which is unshakable and free from all hesitation.

As for communion with the Holy Spirit, by it we mean the grace of the same Spirit. We call it communion because when our Lord with his cross battered down the wall of separation

[1] James 1.8.

between God and ourselves, he saw that we who were separated had nothing in common with which to bridge the gap; the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles achieved this. Since that time the fount of all graces has been opened for men by holy Baptism, and, as St Peter says, we are made partakers of the Divine nature.[1]

Therefore, he who wishes to commend himself to God and to place himself in his keeping has need of an unshakable faith and the aid of the Holy Spirit. Nor do we commend ourselves alone to God, but each other also; for, according to the law of charity, we must seek the good of others as well as our own.

15. *Of the antiphonary chants and their accompanying prayers*

While the deacon presides at the petitions and the holy people pray, the priest himself within the sanctuary prays in silence for those present and for the holy house, that God may pour forth upon them a rich stream of mercy and love. He concludes by giving the reason for his supplications, and the reason why God, in fulfilling them, will only be doing what is just. It is not, he says, that those who beseech him are worthy or have any right to receive, but "Because to thee belong all glory, honour and worship". "Because of thy glory I beseech thee for these things", he says; since to treat us, unworthy as we are, with such love and generosity, redounds to his glory. And this glorification is becoming to him, as David says: "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory."[2]

That is why, when he has finished his silent prayer, the priest recites this explanatory verse in an audible voice, that all may hear, since it is a conclusion and a doxology; he wishes in this way to bring all the faithful to share in his hymn of praise, that God may be worshipped by the whole Church. And the congregation do indeed unite themselves to his prayer, for when he has recited this doxology all the faithful

[1] 2 Pet. 1.4. [2] Ps. 115.1.

say "Amen", and by this acclamation take to themselves as their own the prayers of the priest.

Then the priest intones the sacred psalms, and the chant is taken up by all present, who sing the inspired words of the holy prophets. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High."[1] From the beginning, the words are most apt; they declare that this glorification of God is good. It is essential that we should be aware of this before singing any hymn. When the prophet speaks of giving praise to the Lord, he means giving thanks and singing hymns. After this verse and those which follow have been sung the deacon urges the faithful to prayer.

While the chants and the prayers of the faithful have been going on, the priest within the sanctuary has been praying to God for the whole body of the Church, and particularly for those who have adorned her holy house and have desired to contribute in every possible way to its splendour; he asks that they in their turn may be glorified by God; giving immediately a fitting reason: "For thine is the power, thine the kingdom." Glory is the property of kings, he seems to say, and they have power to render glorious whomsoever they will. You are the eternal King, and power and dominion are yours. This reason, which is in itself a doxology, is proclaimed in a loud voice to all the faithful.

Then, having once more brought the congregation to share in his hymn of praise, the priest intones the second antiphon, which is taken up by the faithful. Afterwards, the faithful again address their prayers to God, under the direction of the deacon as before. The priest in his turn recites a prayer for all the faithful who are praying with him, asking that each may receive from God that which he privately requests, insofar as it is good for him; besides this, he asks on behalf of each eternal life in the world to come, again giving the reason—God's mercy and goodness. This is the end of the prayer, so he says it aloud.

Then he intones the third antiphon. While this is being sung, the Gospels are brought in; the holy book is carried in by the deacon, or, if he be not present, by the priest himself,

[1] Ps. 92.1.

surrounded by a procession of acolytes bearing candles and incense.

The priest, just before he enters the sanctuary, standing immediately in front of the holy gates, prays, while waiting for the chant to end, that God will send his holy angels to escort him to the altar and offer sacrifice with him and take part in the praise of the Lord. This is because God should be worshipped by men and angels together; for it is right that all honour, glory and praise should come to him from those who know how to praise and worship God. When he has prayed thus, he goes into the sanctuary and places the Gospels on the altar.

16. *A summary of the general significance of the sacrifice*

Now we must consider in detail the words of the psalmody, or, as they are called, the antiphons. But first, let us remind ourselves that the sacrifice is a figure of the whole mystery of Christ's redemptive work; likewise, all the ceremonies and prayers which precede and follow the sacrifice symbolize this work.

The sacrifice commemorates the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, since the precious gifts are changed into the very body of the Saviour, that body which rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Those acts which precede the sacrifice recall the events which took place before his death—his coming, his first appearance, and his perfect manifestation; those which come after commemorate what Jesus himself called "the promise of the Father",[1] that is, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, the conversion of the nations which they brought about, and their divine society.

The whole celebration of the mystery is like a unique portrayal of a single body, which from beginning to end preserves its order and harmony, so that each ceremony, each prayer, adds something to the whole. Thus, the opening chants symbolize the first phase of the work of redemption; the

[1] Luke 24.49; Acts 1.4.

readings from Scripture and the other liturgical acts which follow represent the second period.

We have, it is true, ascribed another purpose to these chants and readings—they act as a purification and preparation for the holy mysteries—but nothing prevents them from serving in both capacities; these acts at one and the same time sanctify the faithful and symbolize the scheme of redemption. Just as robes fulfil their function as clothes, and cover the body, while at the same time, by their style, indicating the profession, rank, and dignity of the wearer, so it is with these. Since they are extracts from the Holy Scriptures or other inspired writings, the chants and lessons sanctify those who read and sing them; and because of the selection which has been made and the order in which the passages are arranged they have another function; they fittingly represent the coming of Christ and his work. Not only the chants and prayers but the very actions themselves have this part to play. Each has its own present purpose and usefulness, and at the same time each represents some part of the work of Christ, his deeds and sufferings. For example, we have the bringing of the Gospel to the altar, then the bringing of the offerings. Each is done for a practical reason—the one that the Gospel may be read, the other that the sacrifice may be performed; besides this, however, one represents the appearance, the other the manifestation of the Saviour; the first, obscure and imperfect, at the beginning of his life, the second the perfect and supreme manifestation. There are even certain ceremonies which fulfil no practical purpose, but have only a figurative meaning; such as the stroke of the lance which pierces the Host and traces upon it the mark of a cross, and the emptying of a little warm water into the wine.

In the other sacraments also one finds many things of this kind. In Baptism, for example, the candidates must remove their shoes and clothing; then, with their eyes turned towards the west, they must stretch forth their hands and exhale. Now these ceremonies and others of their kind have no practical importance for the sacrament; they are there to remind us that we must hate the devil, and that anyone who wishes to be a true Christian must drive him away.

Having recalled all this, let us now consider in detail how the whole of the liturgy is a figure of the work of redemption; and first, the chants.

17. *The meaning of the first antiphon*

The first chant exhorts us to glorify God, as is proper at the beginning of our worship. "It is good to give praise to the Lord." These words are an act of praise to God the Father, concerning his only-begotten Son. "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name O Most High."[1] The Most High is the Father, the Lord is the only-begotten Son. It is good to give praise to the Son and the Father. Why do we say this? Because it is a prelude to what comes after; for a common song of praise is to be offered to the Father and the Son, in this manner: the works of the Son, by which the Father was glorified, are to be proclaimed.

The subject of the hymn of praise is this: the Son's becoming nothing, his poverty, his works and sufferings while in the flesh[2] for this is mercy and truth. It is mercy because when we were in a most wretched state, when we were his enemies and in rebellion against him, he did not despise us, on account of his great mercy and love. Not only did he have compassion for our wretched state; he himself shared in our ills, our misery, our death.

Not only did he raise us up after our unhappy fall, but he vouchsafed to gain for us his kingdom and the greatest of all goods; it is in this connection that St Paul says "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared",[3] as if this goodness was then for the first time made manifest in its immensity. And the Lord himself said "God so loved the world",[4] expressing in this simple phrase the infinity of his love. This is why the plan of redemption is given the name of mercy.

It is also called truth, because all the elements of the Old Law looked towards it as shadows and figures towards reality. Because of this, the prophet said of the work of redemption: "The Lord hath sworn truth to David."[5] What is it that was

[1] Ps. 92.1. [2] Phip. 2.7,8. [3] Titus 3.4.
[4] John 3.16. [5] Ps. 89.49.

promised? The Saviour's coming in the flesh, and his life among us. "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne",[1] says God, foretelling the coming of our Lord. The angel Gabriel gives us proof of this when, announcing to the Virgin the miraculous birth of a child, he tells her also how great a one she is to bring forth: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."[2]

It is truth, and it is also judgement and justice; for the Saviour, in driving out sin and slaying the devil through his work of redemption, did it, not by a display of force or a conquest of power, but by judgement and by justice, according to the words: "Judgement and justice are the foundations of thy throne."[3] It is in this way—that is by the sentence of judges—that we triumph over our adversaries in the courts. That is why Christ declared: "Now is the judgement of the world; now the prince of this world shall be cast out."[4] The blessed Dionysius, who was well acquainted with this teaching, says that the infinite love of the Divine Goodness destroyed the power which the fugitive throng, that is to say the demon host, had over us, not by the might of his superior strength, but by the word mystically revealed to us, in judgement and in justice. Since, then, the work of redemption which is the subject of our praise is not only mercy and truth, but also justice and judgement, the Psalmist has added "The Lord our God is just, and there is no iniquity in him."[5]

"It is good to show forth thy loving kindness in the morning and thy faithfulness every night",[6] says the Psalmist. By day and night, or, as he says in another place, at all times.[7]

18. *The meaning of the singing of the prophecies at the beginning of the liturgy*

The second antiphon celebrates that very dominion, glory, and power which came to the Son of God because of his humiliation and poverty.

[1] Ps. 132.11. [2] Luke 1.32,33. [3] Ps. 97.2; Ps. 89.14.
[4] John 12.31. [5] Ps. 145.17; Ps. 92.15. [6] Ps. 92.2.
[7] Ps. 34.1.

Why are these prophetic texts used here? And what is their significance from the point of view of the work of redemption? They represent the first stage of Christ's coming, when, although present on earth, he was not known to the multitude; when "he was in the world and the world knew him not",[1] that is to say, the period before John the Baptist, before the lamp was lit.[2] At this time, he still had need of the prophetic writings. But after he whose coming had been foretold appeared, he no longer needed the prophets. John witnessed to his presence, and so did God the Father, before John's eyes.[3] Wherefore it is said "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John".[4] The time before John the Baptist is represented by these chants taken from the prophetic writings; for during this time the offerings, which are figures of Christ, are not shown to the faithful, but are kept at one side and remain covered.

Now let us consider the words of the antiphon: "The Lord hath reigned; he is apparelled with majesty."[5] The knowledge which the men who submitted to him had of him has been called "royalty", because they knew him to be full of majesty, beauty, and power, as he should have been known. For the Saviour himself said: "All power is given me in heaven and on earth;"[6] since both the inhabitants of heaven and those who dwelt on earth recognized him as their true Lord. And if we read the remainder of the psalm we will find that it is indeed so.

To show the nature of this royalty and power, the prophet adds: "For he hath established the world, which shall not be moved."[7] This establishment is the name given to faith. He has steadied those who were falling into error and bound them to him. For it is a characteristic of those who go astray that they cannot stand firm. Now the Lord said "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost;"[8] and this is the teaching of faith.

But faith alone is not enough for dominion; the nations

[1] John 1.10. [2] John 5.35. [3] John 1.29–34. Matt. 3. 13–17. [4] Matt. 11.13. [5] Ps. 93.1. [6] Matt. 28.18. [7] Ps. 93.1. [8] Matt. 28.19.

would not have been made subject simply by faith. So it was necessary to add the keeping of the commandments. The Psalmist says: "Thy testimonies are made very sure."[1] And our Lord adds to the command to baptize directions concerning the commandments, saying: "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."[2] Those things which the Saviour calls commandments the Scripture calls testimonies. All through Holy Scripture you will find the word "testimony" meaning the laws of God.

The Psalmist concludes with these words: "Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for ever."[3] By holiness he means sacrifices, offerings, and all the worship due to God. When he says that these things become the house of God, he shows that his house is not empty or deprived of God, but that it contains the Master of the house in person. If the house were empty of God it would have no right to those things which belong to God alone. Our Saviour declared this when he added to the words which we have just quoted a promise that he would be always with his Church. St Paul calls the Church the house of the living God: "That you may know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God."[4] "Behold, I am with you", says our Lord; and what the Psalmist expresses in the words "for ever"[5] he makes clear when he says: "Alway, even unto the end of the world."[6]

Thus, this antiphon is an exact foretelling of those things which Christ achieved by his Passion and Death.

19. *The meaning of the third antiphon*

The next antiphon is like an encounter before the Lord who draws near and appears; that is why it is chanted while the Book of the Gospels is brought in and shown, since it represents Christ. It is particularly clear that the prophet sang this canticle with the coming of Christ in mind, so full is it of joy and gladness; he is overflowing with this joy himself, and invites others to share in it with him: "Come, let

[1] Ps. 93.5. [2] Matt. 28.20. [3] Ps. 93.5. [4] 1 Tim. 3.15. [5] Ps. 93.5. [6] Matt. 28.20.

us exult in the Lord."[1] Now man could not rejoice if the Lord had not come; for Christ alone brings us joy. And if there were any who rejoiced before Christ's coming on earth it was because they had been admitted to the mysteries concerning him. Thus, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad."[2] And David himself exclaimed: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;"[3] he begged God to restore to him that joy in Christ which he had before he sinned, and which through sin he lost. If he had said, "Come, let us make light", he would have been announcing the coming of light; so, when he said, "Come, let us exult in the Lord", he was proclaiming the appearance of him who brings joy.

Next, he calls him Saviour and Lord. Now the Scripture calls Christ "Saviour", because of the three Divine Persons the Son alone was the worker of our salvation; he did everything by himself, as St Paul says: "By himself he made purification of our sins."[4] He himself was an example of the good shepherd, who did not send others out to look for the lost sheep, but went himself to search for it, and found it, and bore it on his shoulders.[5] That is why he was given the name Jesus, which means Saviour.

"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving."[6] "Presence" here means the appearance of the Saviour. Let us not wait at home until he comes, but let us go out to meet him with thanksgiving, that is, with hymns of praise. "Let us acclaim him with psalms;" let us give him the honour which is due to God. He has chosen to appear in the form of a slave; but let us not ignore our Master, nor be scandalized by his flesh; let us not be led by his appearance into having unworthy thoughts concerning the Most High. "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King over all the earth;"[7] even he who is veiled in our flesh. And the Psalmist continues his praise of God.

Such are the prophetic verses, well-fitted to be sung at this point.

[1] Ps. 95.1. [2] John 8.56. [3] Ps. 51.12.
[4] Heb. 1.3. [5] Luke 15.4–6. Matt. 18.12,13. [6] Ps. 95.2.
[7] Ps. 95.3.

20. *The showing of the Gospel, and the Trisagion*

When these are over, the priest, standing in front of the altar, raises the Gospel-book and shows it to the people, thus symbolizing the manifestation of the Lord, when he began to appear to the multitudes. For the Gospel represents Christ, in the same way that the books of the Old Testament are called "The Prophets"—in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, Abraham says "They have Moses and the Prophets",[1] meaning the whole of Holy Scripture. But after he who was foretold had appeared and made himself manifest, no one could pay attention to the words of the Prophets. Therefore after the showing of the Gospels, the prophetic texts cease, and we now sing something from the New Testament; we praise the all-holy Mother of God, or the other saints, or we glorify Christ himself for coming to dwell among us, or for the sufferings he endured and the works he achieved on earth. Because of these the Church keeps a perpetual festival.

Next we praise God himself, the Triune God, as the coming of the Saviour revealed him to us. The hymn which we sing comes to us from the angels, and is taken in part from the book of the sacred psalms of the prophet. It was gathered together by Christ's Church and dedicated to the Trinity. For the *Hagios*[2] (the Sanctus), which is repeated thrice, is the angelic acclamation;[3] the words "Strong and immortal God" are those of the blessed David, who exclaims: "My soul thirsts for the strong and living God,"[4] The Church which is the assembly of those who believe and profess the Trinity and Unity of God, played its part in gathering together these two acclamations, joining them, and adding the ejaculation, "Have mercy on us"; she wished to show, on the one hand, the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, and on the other, that angels and men form one Church, a single choir, because of the coming of Christ who was of both heaven and earth.

That is why we sing this hymn after the bringing in and showing of the Book of the Gospels; it is as if we proclaim that

[1] Luke 16.29. [2] Gk: "holy".
[3] Isa. 6.3. Rev. 4.8. [4] Ps. 42.2.

he, by coming among us, has given us a place amid the angels, and established us in the heavenly choir.

21. *The prayer which accompanies the Trisagion, and the sacred acclamations*

Before the Trisagion is begun the priest asks God to accept this song of praise and to give grace to those who sing it. What grace? One which accords with the hymn itself; he prays that their bodies and souls may be cleansed, that their sins may be forgiven, and that they may worship him in holiness all the days of their life. And he gives the reason: "For thou art holy, and restest among saints." It is natural to the All-Holy to delight in his saints and to work sanctification. When he has recited this aloud, he adds the doxology, thus giving the congregation of the faithful the signal for beginning the Trisagion. After they have given the usual response "Amen" to the doxology, they intone the hymn.

After the Trisagion is ended the priest admonishes all present to cast away negligence and inattention, and to listen carefully to what is being said and done, for that is the meaning of "πρόσχωμεν", "Let us pay attention." Then he wishes peace to them all, and calls to mind the wisdom with which they should enter into the holy mysteries and attend to them. What is this wisdom? It is the sum of those thoughts which are in accord with the ceremony, which should occupy those full of faith when they behold and listen to the ceremonies and prayers, so that they are concerned with no purely human sentiment. Such is the wisdom of Christians; that is the meaning of the cry "Wisdom" which the priest says to the faithful many times during the liturgy; it is a reminder of these things. Is this not how we stir each others' memories, often by the use of a single word calling a whole sentence to the minds of our listeners?

Why is this reminder necessary? It is because forgetfulness is a great tyrant; no other human frailty defeats men so often and so easily. Now, it is necessary that our minds and hearts be in accord with the mysteries when we assist at the sacred prayers and ceremonies of the liturgy, unless we wish to

attend in vain, and spend our time to no purpose. But this is far from easy to achieve. That is why, on the one hand, we should keep constant watch on ourselves, and behave with circumspection; and on the other, it is necessary that we should have some external reminder, so that we can collect our thoughts when they have been woolgathering, distracted by vain imaginings. And this is why the verse which is sung during the carrying of the holy offerings to the altar says: "Let us set aside all earthly cares." This is the meaning which lies behind these words.

The cry "Stand up" is also an exhortation. It warns us to be ready for battle when we hold converse with God and assist at the holy mysteries. There must be no inattention; we must act with fervour and all reverence, and in this manner look, listen, and pray throughout the service. The first sign of this fervour and devotion is the uprightness of our bodies; we do these things standing on our feet, not sitting down. This is the attitude of suppliants; this is the attitude of servants whose eyes are intent on the will of their master waiting to do him instant service and ready to perform at once any order which may be given. And are we not God's suppliants in everything of importance, and his servants for every kind of duty?

That is the meaning of these prayers.

22. *The readings from Scripture, their order and meaning*

After the Trisagion the reading from the apostolic book takes place; this is followed by the Gospel. Before each, the Church sings praises to God.

Why do we praise God before the readings from Holy Scripture? Because it is fitting to do so for all those things which he does not cease to bestow upon us, and especially for so great a benefit as listening to the Divine Word. For the Epistle in particular our praise is mingled with supplication, since we add the prayer, "Have mercy upon us". For the Gospel our supplication consists simply in the hymn itself, that we may know that the Gospel represents Christ, and that he who has found Christ has obtained all that he could

desire. For therein is the Bridegroom, and those who possess all things need ask for nothing more. Also, it is not right that: "the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them[1];" rather should they adore and praise him. For the same reason, the hymn of the angels, as the prophets tell us, is purely a song of praise, with no trace of supplication.

What do the readings from Holy Scripture at this point in the liturgy signify? I have already told you their practical purpose; they prepare and cleanse us in readiness for the great sanctification of the holy mysteries. Their significance, however, is this: they represent the manifestation of the Saviour, by which he became known soon after his showing. The first showing of the Gospel, with the book closed, represents the first appearance of the Saviour, when, while he himself remained silent, the Father made him manifest; when he, saying nothing, had need of another's voice to proclaim him.[2] But that which is represented here is his more perfect manifestation, during which he mingled with the crowd and made himself known not only by his own words, but also by that which he taught to his Apostles in sending them to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This is why the Epistle and Gospel are read.

Why do we not read the Gospel first? Because that which Our Lord himself said constitutes a more perfect manifestation than the words of the Apostles. Now the Lord did not display to men all the extent of his power and goodness at once (this was the result of his second manifestation), but he proceeded from that which was more obscure to that which was clearer. That is why, if we wish to illustrate the gradualness of his showing of himself, it is better to read the Epistle before the Gospel. And therefore those texts which reveal his supreme manifestation are kept to the end, as we shall show.

23. *The prayers which follow the Gospel*

After the reading of the Gospel, the deacon urges the con-

[1] Matt. 9.15. [2] Matt. 3.14–17. John 1.29–34.

gregation to prayer. The priest in the sanctuary prays in a low voice that the prayers of the faithful may be acceptable to God. Then he says aloud the final doxology, thus making them sharers in his praise of the Lord.

And what prayer could be more fitting for all, after the Gospel, than one for those who keep the Gospel, who imitate the goodness and generosity of Christ, the shepherds of the people, those who govern the state. These, if they are faithful to the precepts of the Gospel, as the Apostle says: "Achieve after Christ that which is lacking in Christ",[1] in governing his flock as he would wish. Such too are the founders and heads of religious houses and churches, the teachers of virtue and all those who in any way contribute to the common good of the Church and of religion; they have a place here, and are entitled to the prayers of all.

Since we are about to proceed to the sacrifice, at which the uninitiated have no right to be present, the priest dismisses from the congregation of the faithful those whom we call catechumens, because so far they have only received Christianity orally and by instruction; first, however, he prays for them.[2] This is his prayer: that their initiation may be completed by the grace of Baptism at the proper time. The reason for his prayer is the glory of God: "That they also may praise with us Thy venerable and glorious name."

After reciting this doxology aloud, and thus making the faithful partakers in his prayer, the celebrant says another prayer, in which he first thanks God that he has been found worthy to stand before him, and to raise his hands towards him on his own behalf and on that of others; then he prays that he may always be held worthy to perform this act with a pure heart. Again the motive of the prayer is God's glory: "For all glory becomes thee." Having as usual praised God in unity with the congregation, the priest once more prays privately for himself and those present: that he may conduct himself without reproach at the altar, free from any stain of body or soul, and that the faithful who pray with him may be made worthy to partake in the holy mysteries without

[1] Col. 1.24.
[2] Usually in silence in modern times, but see above, p. 9, n 1.

guilt or reproach, and also that they may have a share in the kingdom of heaven. Here too the motive is the same; it is that which St Paul prescribed when he said: "Do all to the glory of God."[1] May it always and in all things be our aim to glorify God. Farmers set before themselves as the aim of their labours the richness of their harvests, and because of this they toil willingly; merchants seek gain, and others similar things. But do you, in everything you do, seek the glory of God. For we are slaves, and owe to our Master this duty for which he first created and then redeemed us. That is why you will find that the Church is everywhere concerned with the glory of God; she proclaims it throughout the universe, she sings of it always, she does all things for God's glory—prayers, supplications, the holy rites, preaching—in short, all that is holy.

[1] 1 Cor. 10.31.

III

THE LITURGY OF THE FAITHFUL (1)

24. *The bearing of the offerings to the altar*

The priest, having said the doxology aloud, comes to the altar of preparation, takes the offerings, and reverently holding them head-high departs. Carrying them thus, he goes to the altar, after walking in slow and solemn procession through the nave of the church. The faithful chant during this procession, kneeling down reverently and devoutly, and praying that they may be remembered when the offering is made. The priest goes on, surrounded by candles and incense, until he comes to the altar. This is done, no doubt, for practical reasons; it was necessary to bring the offerings which are to be sacrificed to the altar and set them down there, and to do this with all reverence and devotion. This is the way in which kings of old brought their gifts to God; they did not allow others to do it for them, but brought their offerings themselves, wearing their crowns. Also, this ceremony signifies the last manifestation of Christ, which aroused the hatred of the Jews, when he embarked on the journey from his native country to Jerusalem, where he was to be sacrificed; then he rode into the Holy City on the back of an ass, escorted by a cheering crowd.

During this ceremony we must prostrate ourselves before the priest and entreat him to remember us in the prayers which he is about to say. For there is no other means of supplication so powerful, so certain of acceptance, as that which takes place through this most holy sacrifice, which has freely cleansed us of our sins and iniquities. If any of those who prostrate themselves thus before the priest who is

carrying the offerings adores them as if they were the Body and Blood of Christ, and prays to them as such, he is led into error; he is confusing this ceremony with that of "the entry of the presanctified", not recognizing the differences between them. In this entry of the offerings, the gifts are not yet consecrated for the sacrifice; in the liturgy of the Presanctified[1] they are consecrated and sanctified, the true Body and Blood of Christ.

25. *The prayers which follow the transference of the offerings, and the exhortations of the priest to the congregation*

The priest places the offerings upon the altar. Then, finding himself on the threshold of the consecration, and about to begin the august sacrifice, he now thoroughly prepares himself, purifying himself by prayer and getting ready for the sacrifice; not only does he do this, but he also prepares all those present, and puts them in dispositions of grace by prayer, mutual charity, and a profession of faith. For in these is contained the whole of the preparation ordained by our Lord, when he said: "Be ye ready."[2] Here are both faith and works; the one is seen in the profession of faith which we make, the other in that charity which is the end of every good work and the peak of all virtue.

This will take place in a moment; but first the priest asks the congregation to pray for his present intentions. "Let us pray to the Lord for the gifts we are about to offer", he says. For that which is about to take place; that these gifts may be consecrated, and that what we offer at the beginning may achieve its end. Then he adds the other intentions for which we must pray to God. He concludes by asking us to commend ourselves and each other and our whole lives into God's keeping.

When he comes to the final section of his private prayer to

[1] In the Liturgy of the Presanctified there is no Consecration. Communion is given from the Sacred Elements which were consecrated at a previous Liturgy. The Liturgy of the Presanctified is used on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent and on the first three days of Holy Week.

[2] Matt. 24.44.

God, he raises his voice, as usual, and recites it as a doxology, to which he unites the faithful. Afterwards he wishes them mutual peace, and urges them to it.

When he has said, "Peace be to all", he adds, "Let us love one another." Since we are commanded by the Apostles to pray for one another,[1] the congregation wishes peace to the priest, saying: "And with thy spirit." Since brotherly love goes hand in hand with love of God, and love of God is not found without faith in the living and perfect God, the priest, as soon as he has reminded us of charity, and urged us to love one another, begins the profession of faith: "That we may confess with one mind", he says; and the faithful cry: "God, whom it is good to confess, the Holy Trinity."

26. *The confession of faith, the exhortations of the priest to the faithful, and their responses*

Now the priest commands the congregation to proclaim that which they have learned and which they believe concerning God; this is to profess true wisdom, of which the Apostle says: "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect."[2] This wisdom is not known to the world (that is, to the worldly-wise), who can conceive of nothing greater or higher than the knowledge of material things, and cannot believe in the existence of a higher wisdom. It is in this wisdom that the priest asks us to open all the doors—that is, our mouths and ears.[3]

Open the doors in this wisdom, he says, proclaiming and listening to these high teachings constantly; not inattentively but eagerly, devoting all your minds to it. Then the faithful recite aloud the whole profession of faith, the creed. The priest then says: "Let us stand upright; let us stand in fear." Let us stand firm on this profession of faith, he seems to say, lest we should be thrown off our balance by the persuasive

[1] James 5.16.

[2] 1 Cor. 2.6.

[3] Historically the deacon's cry "The Doors" was a literal call to the keepers of the doors to close them lest any unauthorized and unbaptized person should be present when the creed is recited and the mysteries consecrated. Cabasilas gives an edifying symbolism to the words.

arguments of heretics. "Let us stand in fear"; for the danger to those who allow in their minds any doubt or hesitation, concerning matters of faith, is very great. And he goes on to say: "Thus standing firm in faith, let our offerings to God proceed as is proper." What does "as is proper" mean? It means: in peace. Let us take care to offer the holy oblation in peace. Remember the words of our Lord: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."[1] The faithful reply: "Not only do we make our offerings in peace; it is peace itself which we offer as a gift and a second sacrifice. For we offer mercy to him who said: 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.'"[2] Now mercy is the child of a strong and true peace. For when the soul is untroubled by passion, there is nothing to hinder it from being filled with mercy and the sacrifice of praise.

When they have made this reply, the priest wishes them the greatest and most divine of all goods: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all;"[3] and the faithful return this blessing, saying "And with thy spirit", in accordance with the command that we should pray for one another. This prayer is taken from the Epistles of St Paul. It procures for us the benefits of the Holy Trinity—*every perfect gift*[4]: and it asks from each of the Divine Persons his special gift: from the Son grace, from the Father love, from the Spirit fellowship. For the Son gave himself as Saviour to us who not only had bestowed nothing upon him, but also were already in his debt, for "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"[5]; his care of us then is in the truest sense a grace. The Father, through the sufferings of his Son, was reconciled to mankind, and showered his love upon his enemies, so that his goodness to us is given the name of love. Finally, the Being rich in mercy[6] wished to give to his enemies who had now become his friends the best of himself, and this the Holy Spirit achieved when he descended upon

[1] Matt. 5.23. [2] Matt. 9.13. [3] 2 Cor. 13.14.
[4] James 1.17. [5] Rom. 5.8. [6] Eph. 2.4.

the Apostles; that is why his goodness to men is called fellowship.

But, you will say, all these benefits were given to men through the coming of the Saviour; what need is there to pray for that which we have already received? The answer is clear: we pray thus in order that we may not lose that which we have received, but may keep it for ever. So the priest does not say: "May these be given to you all", but, "May these be with you all." Let not the grace which has been given to you be taken away.

Having dignified us with such a prayer and thus raised our souls up from the earth, the priest raises our thoughts also, saying: "Let us lift up our hearts"—let us be heavenly-minded, not earthly-minded.[1] The faithful give their consent, and say that their hearts are where our treasure is[2]—there where Christ is, who sits on the right hand of the Father. "We have lifted them up to the Lord."

27. *The consecration of the offerings, and the thanksgiving which precedes it*

Now that our hearts are filled with such beautiful and holy thoughts, nothing remains but to return thanks to God, the Author of all good things; thus the first Priest did, who before instituting the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist gave thanks to God his Father. So the celebrant, before the great prayer in the course of which he will consecrate the holy offerings, addresses to God this act of thanksgiving: "Let us give thanks to the Lord." The faithful give their consent, saying: "It is meet and just." Then the priest himself gives thanks to God, glorifying him, praising him with the angels, and thanking him for all the gifts which he has bestowed upon us from the beginning of time. Finally he recalls the ineffable and incomprehensible mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption; then he consecrates the offerings, and the sacrifice is complete.

How is this? The priest recites the story of that august Last Supper, telling how, before he suffered, he gave to the

[1] Col. 3.2. [2] Matt. 6.21.

disciples this sacrament, and took the bread and the chalice, and having given thanks said those words which expressed the mystery; repeating those words, the celebrant prostrates himself and prays, while applying to the offerings these words of the Only-Begotten, our Saviour, that they may, after having received his most holy and all-powerful Spirit, be transformed —the bread into his holy Body, the wine into his precious and sacred Blood.

When these words have been said, the whole sacred rite is accomplished, the offerings are consecrated, the sacrifice is complete; the splendid Victim, the Divine oblation, slain for the salvation of the world, lies upon the altar. For it is no longer the bread, which until now has represented the Lord's Body, nor is it a simple offering, bearing the likeness of the true offering, carrying as if engraved on it the symbols of the Saviour's Passion; it is the true Victim, the most holy Body of the Lord, which really suffered the outrages, insults and blows; which was crucified and slain, which under Pontius Pilate bore such splendid witness;[1] that Body which was mocked, scourged, spat upon, and which tasted gall. In like manner the wine has become the blood which flowed from that Body. It is that Body and Blood formed by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, which was buried, which rose again on the third day, which ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father.

28. *The origin of our faith concerning these mysteries*

But how can we have faith to believe this?

He himself said: "This is my body. This is my blood." He himself commanded the Apostles to do this, and through them, the whole Church. "Do this", he said, "in remembrance of me." He would not have given this command unless he had been going to give them the power to enable them to do this. What then is this power? It is the Holy Spirit, the power from on high which has strengthened the Apostles according to the words which the Lord spoke unto them: "But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from

[1] 1 Tim. 6.13.

on high."[1] Such is the work of that divine descent. For, once come down, the Holy Spirit did not then forsake us, but he is with us, and he will remain until the end. It is for this purpose that the Saviour sent him, so that he may dwell with us for ever: "Even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."[2] This is the Spirit who through the hand and the tongue of priests consummates the mysteries.

But the Lord was not satisfied with sending the Holy Spirit to abide with us; he has himself promised to be with us, even unto the end of the world.[3] The Paraclete is present unseen because he has not taken a human form, but by means of the great and holy mysteries the Lord submits himself to our sight and touch through the dread and holy mysteries, because he has taken our nature upon him and bears it eternally.

Such is the power of the priesthood, such is the Priest. For after once offering himself, and being made a sacrifice he did not end his priesthood, but is continually offering the sacrifice for us, by virtue of which he is our advocate before God for ever. And therefore it was said of him: "Thou art a priest for ever."[4]

This is why it is impossible for the faithful to be in any doubt about the consecration of the offerings, or of the other mysteries, if they are carried out rightly and with the prayers of the priests.

29. *The criticisms certain Latins made of us, and a refutation of these*

Certain Latins attack us thus: They claim that after the words of the Lord: "Take and eat" and what follows there is no need of any further prayer to consecrate the offerings, since they are already consecrated by the Lord's word. They maintain that to pronounce these words of Christ and then to speak of bread and wine and to pray for their consecration as if they had not already been consecrated, is not only

[1] Luke 24.49. [2] John 14.17. [3] Matt. 28.20.
[4] Ps. 110.4. Heb. 7.17.

impious but futile and unnecessary. Moreover they say that the blessed Chrysostom[1] is witness that these words consecrate the offerings when he said in the same way that the words of the Creator, "Be fruitful and multiply",[2] spoken on a single occasion by God, continue to take effect, so the words once spoken by the Saviour are also operative for ever. Those who rely more on their own prayer than on God's word are in the first place implying that his words lack effectiveness. They show that they put more trust in themselves, and in the third place they make the holy sacrament dependent on something uncertain, namely, human prayer, and in so doing they represent so great a mystery in which the most steadfast faith must be shown as something full of uncertainty. For it does not follow that he who prays will necessarily be heard, even if he has the virtue of Paul.

It is not difficult to refute all these arguments. Take first the works of the divine John[1] on which they rely and consider whether the words of Christ can be compared to the words of the Creator. God said: "Be fruitful and multiply." What then? After these words do we need nothing more to achieve this, and is nothing else necessary for the increase of the human race? Is not marriage and conjugal union essential, and all the other cares which go with marriage, and without which it would be impossible for mankind to exist and develop? We consider marriage, therefore, necessary for the procreation of children, and after marriage we still pray towards this end, and without seeming to despise the Creator's command, being well aware that it is the primary cause of procreation, but through the medium of marriage, provision for nourishment and so on. And in the same way, here in the liturgy we believe that the Lord's words do indeed accomplish the mystery, but through the medium of the priest, his invocation, and his prayer. These words do not take effect simply in themselves or under any circumstances, but there are many essential conditions, and without these they do not achieve their end. Who does not know that it is the death of Christ alone which has brought remission of sins to the world? But

[1] St John Chrysostom, d. 407. [2] Gen. 1.22.

we also know that even after his death faith, penitence, confession, and the prayer of the priest are necessary, and a man cannot receive remission of sins unless he has first been through these processes. What then? Are we to dishonour his death and to claim that it is of no effect, by believing that its results are inadequate unless we ourselves add our contribution? By no means.

It is unreasonable to address reproaches like these to those who pray for the consecration of the offerings. Their confidence in their prayer is not confidence in self, but in God who has promised to grant what they are seeking. It is indeed the very contrary which is fundamental to the conception of prayer. For suppliants perform the act of prayer because they fail to trust themselves in the matters about which they pray and they believe that they can obtain their requests from God alone. In throwing himself upon God, the man who prays admits that he recognizes his own helplessness and that he is dependent on God for everything. This is not my affair, he says, nor within my own powers, but it has need of you, Lord, and I trust it all to you. These principles have an even more wonderful application when we are forced to ask things which are above nature and beyond all understanding, as the sacraments are. Then it is absolutely essential that those who make prayer should rely on God alone. For man could not even have imagined these things if God had not taught him of them; he could not have conceived the desire for them if God had not exhorted him; he could not have expected to receive it if he had not received the hope of it from him who is the Truth. He would not even have dared to pray for those things if God had not clearly shown him that it was according to his will that they should be sought for, and that he is ready to grant them to those who ask. As a result, the prayer is neither uncertain nor the result unsure, as the Lord of the gift has in every way made known his desire to grant it. This is why we believe that the sanctification of the mysteries is in the prayer of the priest, certainly not relying on any human power, but on the power of God. We are assured of the result, not by reason of man who prays, but by reason of God who

hears; not because man has made a supplication, but because the Truth has promised to grant it.

There is no need to speak of the way in which Christ has shown his desire ever to grant this grace. This is why he came into the world, why he was made a sacrifice, why he died. This is why altars and priests and every purification and all the commandments, the teaching and the exhortations exist: all to the end that this holy table may be placed before us. This is why the Saviour declared that he desired to keep the Passover,[1] for it was then that he was going to give the true Passover to his disciples. This is why he commanded them: "Do this in remembrance of me", for he wished this mystery to be performed among us always.

How then could those who pray have any doubt about the object of their prayer, if he intended that those things which they seek to have should be received by them, and he himself wishes to grant them who alone has the power to give? Therefore those who believe that the offerings are consecrated by prayer are neither scorning the words of the Saviour, nor trusting in themselves, nor yet causing dependence on something uncertain, such as human prayer, as the Latins vainly reproach us.

A further proof is that the all-holy Chrism, stated by the blessed Dionysius[2] to be in the same category as Holy Communion, is also consecrated and sanctified by prayer. And the faithful have no doubt that this prayer is efficacious and consecrates. In the same way the ordination of priests, and that of bishops as well, is effected by prayer. He who is ordaining lays on his hands and then says to the clergy: "Let us pray for him, that the grace of the Holy Spirit may come upon him." Similarly in the Latin Church the bishop ordaining priests anoints the head[3] of the candidate with oil and prays that he may be richly endowed with the grace of the Holy Spirit. And it is through prayer that the priest gives absolution from sins to penitents. In the last sacrament of Unction

[1] Luke 22.15.
[2] Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De eccl. hierarch.*, c. 3–4, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 3.
[3] This should be "hands". In the Roman Catholic rite the head of a bishop is anointed at his consecration.

it is equally the prayer of the priests which confers it: this sacrament has the power to give healing from bodily illness and the remission of sins to those on whom it is performed, as is confirmed by Apostolic tradition: "Is there any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him."[1]

How can those who condemn the prayer in the sacraments answer all these arguments?

If, as they say, the result of prayer is uncertain it would be equally uncertain whether the priest is truly of that holy office whose name he bears, or whether the Chrism has the power to consecrate, and therefore it would be impossible for the sacrament of holy communion to exist, since there would be neither priest nor altar. For our critics would hardly maintain that the words of the Lord would be effective if they were spoken by just anyone, and perhaps even without an altar. And indeed the altar upon which the bread must be placed is in fact itself consecrated with the Chrism which in turn is consecrated by prayer. And further, who can give us sure remission of sins if there is doubt about the priests and their supplications?

To follow the innovations of these men would indeed inevitably mean the total destruction of all Christianity. It is therefore clear that for those who hold such doctrines the very foundations of their virtue are in question, and there is indeed great danger for those who fabricate innovations of this kind, alien to the tradition of the Fathers and undermining the security which this tradition guarantees. For God himself has said that he answers prayer and grants the Holy Spirit to those who ask, and nothing is impossible to those who pray in faith, and his assurance cannot be untrue. It is nowhere stated that this will happen to those who simply speak this or that word. It is the tradition of the Fathers who received this teaching from the Apostles and from their successors, that the sacraments are rendered effective through

[1] James 5.14–15.

prayer; all the sacraments, as I have said, and particularly the Holy Eucharist. Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, the great teachers of the Church, affirmed this, as so many others had already done. Those who deny such authorities deserve no consideration from those who believe in right doctrine. The words of the Lord about the holy mysteries were spoken in a narrative manner. None of the Apostles or teachers of the Church has ever appeared to say that they are sufficient to consecrate the offerings of sacraments. The blessed John[1] himself said that, spoken once by Christ, and having actually been said by him, they are always effective, just as the word of the Creator is. But it is nowhere taught that now, spoken by the priest, and by reason of being said by him, they have that efficacy. In the same way the Creator's word is not effective because it is spoken by a man, applied to each particular case, but only because it was once spoken by the Lord.

30. *That in the Latin Church the consecration is performed in the same way as by us*

That which silences our adversaries decisively is the fact that the Latin Church herself, to whom they refer themselves, does not cease to pray for the offerings after the words of consecration have been pronounced. This point has escaped them, no doubt, because the Latins do not recite this prayer immediately after pronouncing Christ's words, and because they do not ask explicitly for consecration and the transformation of the elements into the Body of the Lord, but use other terms, which, however, have exactly the same meaning.

This is their prayer: "Command that these offerings be carried in the hands of thy holy angel to thine altar on high."[2] What do they mean when they say: "That these

[1] I.e., St John Chrysostom.

[2] The prayer referred to is as follows: "Supplices te rogamus omnipotens Deus, jube haec perferri per manus angeli tui in sublime altare tuum in conspectu divinae majestatis tuae: ut quotquot ex hac altaris participatione sacrosanctum filii tui corpus et sanguinem sumpserimus, omni benedictione coelesti et gratia repleamur. Per eundem Christum dominum nostrum. Amen."

(We humbly beseech thee Almighty God command that these things be carried by the hands of thy Angel to thy altar on high before the

offerings may be carried up"? Either they are asking for a *local* translation of the offerings, i.e. from the earth and the lower regions to heaven, or they are asking that they be raised in dignity from a humble state to the highest of all.

If the first of these is the case, we must ask of what benefit it is to us to pray that the holy mysteries may be taken away from us, since our prayers and our faith assure us and demand that they should not only be with us but remain with us, since it is in this that Christ's remaining with us even to the end of the world consists.[1] And if they know that it is Christ's Body, how can they not believe that he is truly but mysteriously both with us and in heaven, sitting at the Father's right hand, in a manner known only to himself? How, on the one hand, shall that which is not yet the Body of Christ, which is truly heavenly, become heavenly? Or how, on the other, could that which excels all authority, power, dominion, and supremacy be carried up in the hand of an angel?

Supposing, on the other hand, that the prayer of the Latins is asking that the offerings be raised in dignity and transformed into a higher reality, then they are guilty of a monstrous blasphemy if, considering that the Body of the Lord is already present, they nevertheless believe that it can become something higher and holier.

Thus it is clear that the Latins know perfectly well that the bread and wine are not yet consecrated; that is why they pray for the offerings as elements still in need of prayer. They pray that these which are still here below may be carried on high, that, as offerings which have not yet been sacrificed, they may be carried to the altar where they are to be immolated. For this, they have need of the hand of an angel, in the sense in which the great Dionysius[2] speaks when he says that the first hierarchy, that of the angels, comes to the aid of the second and human hierarchy.

This prayer can have only one significance—it transforms the offerings into the Body and Blood of the Lord. It is not

sight of thy divine majesty: that so many of us as shall by this partaking at the altar receive the most holy Body and Blood of thy Son, may be fulfilled with all grace and heavenly benediction. Through the same Christ our Lord.)

[1] Matt. 28.20. [2] Ps.-Dionysius, *op. cit.*, c. 5.

to be imagined that the altar which it names lies in some place above the heavens set apart by God; to do this would be to associate ourselves with those who believe that the proper place of worship is in Jerusalem or on the mountain of Samaria.[1] But since, as St Paul says, there is one God and one mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, in the Saviour alone is all that can confer upon us sanctification or have power of intercession. And what are those things which have power of intercession and can confer sanctification? The priest, the victim, the altar. For, as our Lord says, "The altar that sanctifieth"[2]—the altar consecrates the gift.

Now, since Christ alone sanctifies, he alone must be priest, victim, and altar. We know from his own words that he is both priest and victim: "For their sakes I sanctify myself."[3] The most holy Dionysius, in his chapter *On Chrism*, tells us that Christ is the altar. "If our divine altar is Jesus, he who is the divine consecration of heavenly minds, in whom we ourselves, consecrated and mystically sacrificed, have our oblation, let us look upon this divine altar with the eyes of the spirit."[4]

The priest then prays that the offerings may be carried up to the heavenly altar—in other words, that they may be consecrated and transformed into the heavenly Body of the Lord. There is no question of a change of place, a passage from earth to heaven, since we see that the offerings remain among us, and that even after the prayer their appearances remain.

Since the altar consecrates the gifts placed upon it, to pray that the gifts may be carried to the altar is to ask that they be consecrated.

What is the consecration conferred by the altar? That of the offerings placed upon it. Through that consecration the Divine Priest himself is sanctified by being offered to God and sacrificed.[5] Since Christ is at one and the same time priest, altar, and victim, the consecration of the offerings by this priest, their transformation into this victim, and their carrying up to the heavenly altar are all one and the same thing. Therefore, if you pray that any one of these things come to

[1] John 4.20,21. [2] Matt. 23.19. [3] John 17.19.
[4] Ps.-Dionysius, *op. cit.*, c. 4. [5] John 17.19.

pass, you pray for all; you possess that for which you pray and you have accomplished the sacrifice.

Your (Latin) priests, regarding Christ as the victim, pray that the offerings may be placed in him; thus, though in different words, they are asking just what we ask. That is why our priests, after they have prayed that the elements may be changed into the Divine Body and Blood, and having made mention of the heavenly altar, do not go on to ask that the offerings be carried up to it, since they have already been taken there and accepted, but they ask that in return the grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit may be sent to us. "Let us pray for the consecrated offerings." That they may be consecrated? Certainly not, since they are so already; but that they may sanctify us, that God who sanctified them may sanctify us through them.

It is evident therefore that it is not the whole Latin Church which condemns the prayer for the offerings after the words of consecration, but only a few innovators, who are causing her harm in other ways; they are men who pass their time in nothing else but "to tell, or to hear some new thing."[1]

31. *Why, during the consecration, the priest invokes not the Son but the Father.*[2]

Why is it that for the consecration of the offerings the celebrant does not invoke the Son, who is the Priest and Sanctifier, as we have said, but rather the Father?

It is to teach us that the Saviour possesses this power of sanctification not in his quality as a man, but because he is God, and because of the Divine power which he shares with his Father. This is what our Lord himself wished to show us when, while instituting the sacrament, he lifted his eyes up to heaven and offered the Bread to his Father. For the same reason, he performed many of his miracles in an attitude of prayer to God; he wished to show that this was not the work of his human nature, according to which he had a mother on earth, but of his Divinity, according to which God was his Father. In the same way, when he was about

[1] Acts 17.21. [2] I.e. in the Anaphora, or Canon, as a whole.

to ascend the Cross, wishing to show that he had two wills, the Divine and the human, he attributed to his Father his Divine will, keeping to himself his human one. "Not as I will but as thou wilt",[1] and again: "Not my will but thine be done."[2] Yet the very words in which he seems to separate his own will from that of his Father show that he himself willed that will of the Father which he fulfilled. For the phrase "Not my will but thine be done" implies agreement and a unity of wills. He demonstrates this also when he reproaches Peter for shrinking from the idea of his cross and death[3] and again when he says: "I have greatly longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."[4] I have desired this Passover before my Passion, he says—as if to say: I have desired to reach the threshold of that Passion.

32. *Of the sacrifice itself, and what is sacrificed*

Concerning the sacrifice itself there is a question that deserves to be considered. Since we are not concerned with a mere figurative sacrifice or symbolic shedding of blood, but with a true holocaust and sacrifice, we must ask ourselves what it is that is sacrificed: is it bread or the Body of Christ? Or, to put it in another way, are the offerings sacrificed before consecration or afterwards?

If it is bread which is sacrificed, we must ask ourselves how such a thing can be. Surely the holy mysteries do not consist in assisting at a sacrifice of bread, but rather that of the Lamb of God, who by his death has taken away the sins of the world.[5]

Yet on the other hand it seems impossible that it can be the Lord's Body which is sacrificed. For this Body can no longer be slain or stricken, since, now a stranger to the grave and to corruption, it has become immortal.[6] And even if it were not impossible that it should suffer again, there would have to be executioners to perform the Crucifixion, and all those other elements which were present at that sacrifice—that is, if it were to be a true sacrifice, and not simply a representation.

[1] Matt. 26.39. [2] Luke 22.42. [3] Matt. 16.22,23.
[4] Luke 22.15. [5] John 1.29. [6] Rom. 6.9.

How then can this be, since Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more?[1] He has suffered once in time; he was offered once to bear the sins of many.[2] Yet if he is sacrificed at every celebration of the mysteries, he dies daily.

Is there an answer to these problems? Yes: the sacrifice is accomplished neither before nor after the consecration of the bread, but at the very moment of consecration itself. It is necessary thus to preserve all the teachings of our faith concerning sacrifice, without overlooking any. What are these teachings? In the first place, that this sacrifice is not a mere figure or symbol but a true sacrifice; secondly, that it is not the bread which is sacrificed, but the very Body of Christ; thirdly, that the Lamb of God was sacrificed once only, for all time.

Now let us see whether the liturgy is a real sacrifice, and not just a representation.

The sacrificing of a sheep consists in a changing of its state; it is changed from an unsacrificed sheep to a sacrificed one. The same is true here; the bread is changed from unsacrificed bread into something sacrificed. In other words, it is changed from ordinary unsacrificed bread into that very Body of Christ which was truly sacrificed. Through this transformation the sacrifice is truly accomplished, just as that of the sheep was when it was changed from one state to another. For there has been in the sacrifice a transformation not in symbol but in reality; a transformation into the sacrificed Body of the Lord.

If it were the bread which, remaining bread, was to be sacrificed, it would be the bread which was immolated, and the immolation of the bread would then be the sacrifice.

But the transformation has been a double one; the bread, from being unsacrificed, has become a thing sacrificed, and it has also been changed from simple bread into the Body of Christ. It follows therefore that this immolation, regarded not as that of the bread but as that of the Body of Christ, which is the substance which lies beneath the appearance of bread, is truly the sacrifice not of the bread but of the Lamb of God, and is rightly so called.

Now it is clear that, under these conditions, it is not

[1] Rom. 6.9. [2] Heb. 9.28.

necessary that there should be numerous oblations of the Lord's body. Since the sacrifice consists, not in the real and bloody immolation of the Lamb, but in the transformation of the bread into the sacrificed Lamb, it is obvious that the transformation takes place without the bloody immolation. Thus, though that which is changed is many, and the transformation takes place many times, yet nothing prevents the reality into which it is transformed from being one and the same thing always—a single Body, and the unique sacrifice of that Body.

IV

THE LITURGY OF THE FAITHFUL (2)

33. *The prayers after the sacrifice. Why the priest commemorates the saints and especially the all-holy Virgin here*

When the sacrifice has been thus completed, the priest, seeing before him the pledge of God's love of mankind, the Lamb of God, uses him as his intercessor and, with him as advocate, makes his petitions known to God, and pours forth his prayers in sure and certain hope; he asks that the intentions which he commemorated when the bread was brought, those for which he prayed at the preparation for the celebration of the mysteries, and those for which he pleaded when offering up the gifts and asking that they might be found acceptable may now have their effect, since God has been pleased to accept our offerings.

What are these effects? They are common to the living and the departed: that for the gifts which he has been pleased to accept, God will send grace in return. In particular, that the departed may have rest for their souls, and may, with the saints who have completed their course, inherit the kingdom; and that the living may partake of the holy table, and be made holy, and that none may partake to his own judgement and condemnation; likewise, that they may receive remission of their sins, peace, fruitfulness, and the provision of what is necessary to them; and finally that they may in God's sight appear worthy of the kingdom.

The offering of sacrifice is not only an act of supplication; it is one of thanksgiving as well, in the same way that, at the beginning of the liturgy, in dedicating the offerings to God,

the priest gave thanks and made supplication at the same time; he now, having consecrated and sacrificed these gifts, unites thanksgiving with petition. He states the reasons for his thanksgiving, and names those for whom he prays.

The reasons for thanksgiving, as has already been said, are the Saints; for in them the Church finds that which she seeks and obtains that for which she has prayed—the kingdom of heaven. Those for whom she prays are they who have not yet reached perfection and are still in need of prayer.

These are the priest's words concerning the saints: "We offer thee also this spiritual sacrifice in honour of those who rest in faith, our fathers and ancestors, patriarchs, apostles, prophets, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, virgins and all souls who have departed in peace, and especially for our all-holy and pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary." Then he commemorates the whole assembly of the saints. They are the cause for which the Church gives thanks to God. It is for them that she offers to him a spiritual sacrifice in thanksgiving; above all, it is for the blessed Mother of God, who surpasses all others in holiness. That is why the priest asks for nothing on behalf of the saints; rather, he asks that he may be assisted by them in his prayers; because, as we have said, for them the gifts are offered not in supplication but in thanksgiving.

Next, the priest makes his supplication, and names those things for which he prays, asking for salvation for all, and for each one that of which he stands in need. Thus he says: "We offer to thee this spiritual sacrifice also for the whole world, for the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, for the governors of our august state, and for our most faithful emperors, devoted to Christ." These are his petitions.

The blessed John Chrysostom, in illustrating the double aspect of this spiritual sacrifice—eucharistic and supplicatory—places separately those for whom thanksgiving is made and those who are prayed for. The divine Basil, however, unites thanksgiving and supplication; he does this throughout the liturgy, and almost all his prayers will be found to have this twofold application. He commemorates the same saints as the holy John Chrysostom, and in the same parts of the liturgy, but in a different manner. After praying that all may be made worthy to partake of the holy mysteries "Not to their judgement and condemnation", he adds: "And that we may find grace with all the saints, who in all ages have been pleasing to thee, our fathers and ancestors", and so on. Then, "Especially the all-holy Mother of God." These words are of a supplicatory nature, but they are also an act of thanksgiving; they proclaim God as supreme benefactor of the human race. Among the benefits bestowed by God they number those whom he has perfected and sanctified. It is as if one said: "Give us the grace which thou hast already given to the saints; sanctify us as thou hast already sanctified so many of our race".

No more need be said on this subject.[1]

34. *What the priest asks for himself and for the holy offerings, and the intentions for which he asks the faithful to pray*

After he has prayed for the needful gifts of grace for everyone, the priest prays for himself, and asks that he too may be sanctified by the holy offerings.

In what does this sanctification consist? In the remission of sins; that is the chief effect of these sacred offerings. We know this because of our Lord's words to the Apostles, when he showed them the bread: "This is my Body, which is broken for you unto the remission of sins," and because of his words concerning the chalice, which have the same meaning.

"Be mindful also, O Lord, of my unworthy self", says the priest. "Forgive me all my offences, voluntary and involuntary, and do not, on account of my sins, take away from these present offerings the grace of thy Holy Spirit."[2]

The Holy Spirit grants to those who partake of the sacred offerings the remission of their sins. "Let not this grace be removed from these offerings because of my sins." There are two ways in which grace operates in the precious offerings; first, by grace they are sanctified, and secondly, by grace we are sanctified through them.

[1] But see chapters 48–50.
[2] These words are not in the modern text of the Liturgy of St Chrysostom, but they are still in the Liturgy of St Basil.

The working of grace upon the offerings—the first of which we spoke—cannot be invalidated by any human evil. Since the consecration of the offerings is not the work of human virtue, it cannot be hindered in any way by the wickedness of men.

But the second, the working of grace within us, demands our co-operation, and, as a result, our negligence can impede it. In other words, grace will sanctify us through the sacred offerings if it finds us ready and fit for sanctification; if it should, on the other hand, find us unprepared, not only do we reap no benefit, but we suffer grave harm and loss. It is this grace—whether it consists only in the remission of sins or whether it brings with it every blessing granted to those who partake of the sacred banquet with a pure heart—which the priest prays may not be taken away from the holy offerings, because it can, in fact, be taken away by human wickedness.

The celebrant offers this same prayer, in union with the congregation, a few moments later, wishing: "Unity to all, so that we may glorify God with one heart and one mind", and promising the souls thus disposed: "The mercy of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Then after summoning the saints to our aid, he calls upon the faithful to address to God that prayer which the Lord himself composed; for thus to commemorate the saints is to invoke them and pray to them.

What does the priest say? "Let us pray to the Lord for the sanctified offerings"; not that they may be sanctified (I have called them "sanctified" to prevent you from thinking this) but that they may impart this sanctification to us. For this is surely what we mean when we ask the merciful God, who has accepted these offerings, to send us grace in return. "Let us pray for the offerings", says the celebrant; that they may fulfil in us their function, that they be not rendered powerless to produce this grace, as occasionally happened when our Saviour was on earth—there were cities in which his almighty hand could work no miracles, because of their lack of faith.[1]

After having called the faithful to prayer in this way, the

[1] Matt. 13.58. Mark 6.5,6.

priest prays by himself in a low voice for the same intentions —for grace to partake of the holy mysteries with a pure heart and to enjoy the benefits of this holy table—the remission of sins, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom; and that we may not partake to our judgement and condemnation.

Then, when he has prayed that the faithful may have God's support and protection, he calls upon them to ask that the whole day may be holy, perfect, peaceful, and sinless, and that they may have as their defender a faithful angel of peace, since to entrust their safety to the angel of lies would be the height of folly. We pray for a guardian angel, not that one may be given us, since each of us has one from the moment of his birth, but that he may be active and may fulfil his task, that he may protect us and lead us in the right way, and may not, angered by our sins, desert us.

The priest also calls upon us to beg for the remission of our sins, and for the bestowal of all that is good and useful to our souls, and for the peace of the world and a secure future; and that we may pass the rest of our lives in peace and penitence, so that our end may be such as befits a Christian. Finally, he asks us to commend ourselves, and one another, and our whole lives to God, and to pray for unity of faith and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

We have already pointed out several times why we ask for unity of faith and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

35. *The Lord's Prayer and the bowing of the head; the accompanying prayer and doxology*

When he has thus edified the faithful, and in so many ways aroused them to virtue, the priest, considering that their preparation is now complete and that they are worthy of Divine adoption, asks God that they may be held worthy to say with him the prayer in which we dare to call him Father. The whole congregation says the prayer with him, and the priest raises his voice when he comes to the end, and recites the conclusion as a doxology.

After this he wishes peace to all. He has just reminded

them of their nobility, calling God their Father; now he calls upon them to acknowledge him as Lord, and to show him a sign of their servitude by bowing their heads, thus indicating their dependence on him. They bow before him not simply as creatures before their Lord and Creator, but as purchased slaves to him who obtained them at the price of the blood of his only Son; for he possesses us by double right, as slaves whom he has made his children. For the same precious Blood both increased our slavery and brought about the Divine adoption.

While the faithful bow their heads, the celebrant gives thanks to God for all that he has made, and once more asks for those things which are necessary to each, calling to mind the name of his only-begotten Son, and his grace and love, in order to ensure that his prayers will be granted, as our Saviour promised: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."[1] This commemoration of the Son is followed by the doxology, which the priest recites aloud to the listening throng, who are thus made sharers in his glorification of the most holy Trinity.

After this he prays alone once more, in a low voice; in his prayer he invokes Christ himself, who is Victim, Priest, and Bread, that he may give himself, by his own hand, to his servants.

36. *The proclamation of the priest to the people when he elevates the holy offerings, and their reply*

On the point of approaching the holy table, and of summoning others to it, the celebrant, who knows that partaking of the sacrament is not permitted to all, does not invite all to Communion. He takes the Bread of Life, and, showing it to the people, summons those who are worthy to receive it fittingly. "Holy things to the holy", he cries, as if to say: "Here before your eyes is the bread of life. Let not everyone come to receive it, but only those who are worthy, for holy things are for the holy only." Those whom the priest calls holy are not only those who have attained perfection, but those also

[1] John 16.23.

who are striving for it without having yet obtained it. Nothing prevents them from being sanctified by partaking of the holy mysteries, and from this point of view being saints. It is in this sense that the whole Church is called holy, and that the Apostle, writing to the Christian people as a whole, says to them: "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."[1] The faithful are called saints because of the holy thing of which they partake, because of him whose Body and Blood they receive. Members of his Body, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, as long as we remain united to him and preserve our connection with him, we live by holiness, drawing to ourselves, through the holy mysteries, the sanctity which comes from that Head and that Heart. But if we should cut ourselves off, if we should separate ourselves from the unity of this most holy Body, we partake of the holy mysteries in vain, for life cannot flow into dead and amputated limbs.

And what can cut off the members from this holy Body? "It is your sins which have separated me from you",[2] says God.

Does all sin then bring death to man? No indeed, but mortal sin only; that is why it is called mortal. For according to St John there are sins which are not mortal.[3] That is why Christians, if they have not committed such sins as would cut them off from Christ and bring death, are in no way prevented, when partaking of the holy mysteries, from receiving sanctification, not in name alone, but in fact, since they continue to be living members united to the Head.

So, when the priest says: "Holy things to the holy", the faithful reply: "One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father." For no one has holiness of himself; it is not the consequence of human virtue, but comes to all from him and through him. It is as if we were to place mirrors beneath the sun; each would shine, and send forth rays of light, so that one would think there were many suns; yet in truth there is but one sun which shines in all; just so Christ, the only Holy One, pours himself forth upon the faithful, shines in so many souls, and gives light to many saints; yet he alone is holy, in the glory of the Father. No one has rendered to God the glory which is his due. Therefore

[1] Heb. 3.1. [2] Isa. 59.2. [3] 1 John 5.16,17.

the Lord reproached the Jews, saying: "If I be God, where is my glory?"[1] Only his only-begotten Son has rendered to him this glory. That is why he said, when his passion drew near: "I have glorified thee on the earth."[2] How did he glorify him? Simply by manifesting his own holiness before men; he showed himself to be holy as the Father is holy. If we regard God as the Father of the All-Holy, the splendour of the Son is the glory of the Father; if we regard him as God in his humanity, then the dignity and holiness of the Masterpiece are the glory of the Creator.

37. *The meaning of the pouring of warm water into the wine*

When he has summoned the faithful to the sacred banquet, the priest gives the sacrament to himself, and afterwards to all those of priestly rank and the altar-servers. But before this he drops into the chalice a little warm water, to symbolize the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. For the Holy Spirit came down when the whole plan of redemption had been completed. And now the descent of the Spirit comes about when the sacrifice has been offered and the holy offerings have reached their perfection; it will be completed in those who communicate worthily.

The whole scheme of Christ's work, as we have seen, is depicted in the Host during the liturgy; there we see the symbol of the infant Christ, of Christ led to death, crucified, and pierced with a lance; then we see the bread transformed into the most holy Body which actually endured these sufferings, and rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, where it sits at the right hand of the Father. So it is fitting that the later fulfilment of all these events should be symbolized, that the celebration of the liturgy may be complete, the final effects being added to the work of redemption.

What is the effect and the result of the sufferings and works and teaching of Christ? Considered in relation to ourselves, it is nothing other than the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. So it is fitting that this should be represented

[1] Mal. 1.6. [2] John 17.4.

after the other mysteries, as it is when the warm water is poured into the chalice.

Since this warm water is not only water, but shares the nature of fire, it signifies the Holy Spirit, who is sometimes represented by water, and who came down upon the Apostles in the form of fire. This point of the liturgy represents that moment in time, for the Holy Spirit came down after all things pertaining to Christ had been accomplished. In the same way, when the holy offerings have attained their ultimate perfection, this water is added.

For the mysteries also represent the Church, which is the Body of Christ; she received the Holy Spirit after our Lord's ascension; now she receives the gift of the Holy Spirit after the offerings have been accepted at the heavenly altar; God, who has accepted them, sends us the Holy Spirit in return, as we have said; for then and now there is one Mediator and one Spirit.

38. *How the holy mysteries represent the Church*

The Church is represented in the holy mysteries, not in figure only, but as the limbs are represented in the heart, and the branches in the root, and, as our Lord has said, the shoots in the vine. For here is no mere sharing of a name, or analogy by resemblance, but an identity of actuality.

For the holy mysteries are the Body and Blood of Christ, which are to the Church true food and drink. When she partakes of them, she does not transform them into the human body, as we do with ordinary food, but she is changed into them, for the higher and divine element overcomes the earthly one. When iron is placed in the fire, it becomes fire; it does not, however, give the fire the properties of iron; and just as when we see white-hot iron it seems to be fire and not metal, since all the characteristics of the iron have been destroyed by the action of the fire, so, if one could see the Church of Christ, insofar as she is united to him and shares in his sacred Body, one would see nothing other than the Body of the Lord.

Because of this, St Paul wrote: "Ye are the body of Christ,

and members in particular."[1] If he called Christ the head and us the members, it was not that he might express his loving care for us, his teaching and admonition, or our complete subjection to him, as we, in exaggeration, sometimes describe ourselves as members of our relatives or friends, but to demonstrate a fact—to wit, that from henceforth the faithful, through the blood of Christ, would live in Christ, truly dependent on that Head and clothed with that Body.

That is why it is not unreasonable to say that the holy mysteries represent the Church.

39. *Of the summoning of the faithful to Communion, and their acclamation of the Sacred Gifts when they are shown to them*

When the priest has received communion, he turns towards the people, and, exhibiting the holy mysteries, calls to those who wish to receive communion, commanding them to approach in faith and the fear of the Lord, showing neither contempt for the humble appearances, nor doubt because the object of faith is above reason, but recognizing the dignity of the sacrament, which is a source of eternal life for those who receive it.

The faithful, to show their devotion and faith, adore and bless, and proclaim the divinity of Jesus, hidden under the sacramental veils. That their doxology may be the more splendid, they borrow the words of the Psalmist: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." "The Lord is God and has appeared to us."[2] Jesus said: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."[3] It is the nature of the Lord, the only-begotten Son, to glorify the Father. But the nature of the fugitive slave is arrogance and desertion. The prophet was well aware of this, and knew the difference between the good shepherd and the wolf, and he blessed from afar the name of him who comes in the name of the Lord; he calls the Father Lord, and him who has appeared to us

[1] 1 Cor. 12.27. [2] Ps. 118.26,27. [3] John 5.43.

he calls God. In these very words the people bless Christ who is coming, and has appeared to them.

40. *The priest's prayer for the faithful who have communicated*

Next, the priest prays for those who have just communicated, asking God to grant them salvation and blessing. His words are these: "Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance."[1] These words of the Psalmist are connected with those others which he gives, as of the Father to the Son: "I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."[2] For that which God possessed from all eternity was afterwards given to him as a heritage when he became man.

But, since the Son is himself our creator, why does the priest not say: "Bless thy works, which thou hast made", instead of, "thine inheritance"? So that we may the more easily persuade him, by calling to mind the poverty which he bore for our sakes. I beseech thee, the priest seems to say, on behalf of those souls for whom thou didst deign to become a servant, to obey commands and to be numbered among those who receive, although thou possessest all, and to be given the title of heir, when thou hadst nothing to acquire. Thus to recall our closest relationship with Christ moves the Lord to greater mercy. Now, inheritance is a far closer relationship than creation. The Son, in inheriting us, possesses us far more highly and excellently than he did by creating us. Through creation, he had dominion over man's nature; through inheritance he has become Lord of our minds and wills, and that is true dominion. For he has his first right of possession even over irrational and inanimate beings, since by nature all things that God has created are in his power.

But how did he, by inheritance, become Lord of our minds and wills? In this way: we subjected them to him who came down on earth, who was crucified and who rose from the dead; we submitted our minds in recognizing him as true God and sovereign lord of every creature; we submitted our

[1] Ps. 28.9. [2] Ps. 2.8.

wills in giving him our love, accepting his rule, and taking his yoke upon our shoulders with joy. That is how God took perfect possession of mankind and truly acquired us; it was this possession that the prophet Isaiah desired so long ago, when he said: "O Lord our God, possess us".[1] This is the inheritance which the Scriptures tell us that the Only-Begotten received from his Father, and which we recall in this prayer.

41. *Thanksgiving and doxology*

Now the liturgy is complete, and the eucharistic rite at an end. The offerings have been consecrated and have themselves sanctified the priest and the surrounding clergy, and through the priest the remainder of the faithful congregation. So now the celebrant and congregation end with thanksgiving and praise to God. "Blessed be God, now and forever, world without end", says the priest.

The congregation intones the canticle taken from the writings of the Psalmist: "Let our mouths be filled with praise, O Lord, that we may celebrate thy glory."[2] We are not worthy, Lord, to offer you a hymn of praise for the benefits you have vouchsafed to us, but grant us this also by filling our mouths with praise; and as you have given the grace of prayer to those who ask for it, that we may know for what, and how, to pray, so now give our lips the power to praise you.

Then the faithful ask that the sanctification which they have received may remain with them, and that, supported by his hand, they may not lose grace, or the gift which has been vouchsafed to them. "Keep us in thy holiness." By doing what?—for our efforts are also necessary. "By meditating always on thy righteousness." Righteousness here means the wisdom of God and his love, which we have seen in the holy mysteries, as St Paul understood when he said: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."[3] Meditation upon this righteousness has the power to preserve sanctification in us, for it increases our faith in God, enkindles charity, and

[1] cf. Isa. 26.13. [2] Ps. 71.8. [3] Rom. 1.16.

does not allow the soul to suffer evil. It was not in vain that we said, at the beginning of this commentary, that thoughts and reflections worthy of the divine mysteries were necessary to establish and preserve holiness in us.[1]

[1] Chapter 53 continues this theme.

V

A THEOLOGICAL PARENTHESIS

42. *Whether the faithful departed are sanctified by the holy offerings as the living are*

There is another question which we must consider. We have seen that this divine and holy sacrifice sanctifies in two ways. First by intercession; the offerings we make, by the very fact of being offered, sanctify those who offer them, as well as those for whom they are offered, and cause God to look favourably upon them. Secondly, by participation; for the offerings become for us true meat and drink, as the Saviour said. Of these two ways, the first is common to the living and the dead, since the sacrifice is offered for both; but the second is possible only to the living, since the dead can no longer eat or drink. What then? Because of this, are the dead not to benefit from the sanctification which comes from communion? Are they to be in this worse off than the living? By no means; for Christ himself communicates with them, in a mysterious way known only to him.

To make this clear, let us consider the essential causes of this sanctification, and see whether the souls of the dead as well as of the living cannot possess it. Does it come because one has a body, approaches the holy table on one's feet, receives the holy species in one's hands, takes them in one's mouth, and eats and drinks them? Certainly not; for many who communicate in this fashion and come thus to the holy mysteries gain no benefit from it, but return the worse for grave sins.

What then are the causes of sanctification in those who are made holy? What conditions does Christ demand? Purity of heart, love of God, desire for the sacrament, zeal for com-

munion, a glowing ardour, a burning thirst. These are the means by which we draw sanctification to ourselves; these are necessary if we are to partake of Christ; without them true communion is impossible. Yet none of these is the property of the body; all are characteristic of the soul. Therefore there is nothing to prevent the souls of the dead from possessing them as well as those of the living.

If then the soul is ready and prepared to receive the sacrament, and if he who has the power to sanctify and perfect wishes to do so, and desires to continue to give himself, what can hinder such a communion? Absolutely nothing.

Then, you will say, if a living man has the dispositions which you mention in his soul, and yet does not partake of the holy mysteries, will he nevertheless receive the sanctification which the sacrament gives?

Not in all cases; only when it is physically impossible for him to receive the elements, as it is for the dead. Such was the case of the solitaries who lived in the desert, or in caves and grottoes in the mountain-side, and could not avail themselves of priest or altar. Christ gave them this sanctification in an invisible manner. We know this because they had life, which they could not have had without partaking of the sacrament, for Christ himself said: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."[1] Another proof is the fact that God sent angels to several of these men with the sacrament.

If, however, a man could come to the altar but does not, it is impossible for him to receive the sanctification which the sacrament brings; this is not because he does not come, but because he could come and will not; for this shows that his soul is void of the good dispositions required for the sacrament.

What desire, what longing for the holy table does he possess who could easily come to it but will not? What faith in God has he who does not fear the Saviour's threats concerning those who despise this banquet? How can one believe in the love of him who, although able to receive the sacrament, does not bother to do so?

[1] John 6.53.

It is not then surprising that Christ should grant to those departed souls who are innocent of such faults a share in this sacred banquet. It is amazing and supernatural that a man living in corruption can nourish himself on incorruptible flesh; but what is strange in the idea of an immortal soul nourishing itself on immortal food, as is its nature? And if the first thing, which is marvellous and beyond nature, has been accompished by God in his ineffable love and hidden wisdom, why should he not accomplish the other, which is both logical and likely?

43. *That sanctification is wrought chiefly in the soul of the communicant*

Those still living in the body receive communion through the flesh, but it first penetrates the substance of the soul, and then passes through the soul to the body. This is what the blessed Apostle means when he writes: "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit with him."[1] For this union and intercourse take place primarily in the soul.

The reason is that man's nature lies chiefly in his soul; there he stores up the holiness which proceeds from his virtues and his human activity; there too is the home of sin. All that concerns the body comes from the soul; just as the body is defiled by the evil thoughts of our hearts,[2] so its sanctification comes from the soul; and this is true of the sanctification of virtue as well as of sacramental sanctification. There are even certain bodily ills which come to us because of the wickedness of our souls. That is why our Saviour freed the body from infirmity, that he might cure the soul's ills by delivering it from sin.[3]

To receive holiness the soul has no need of the body; rather, the body needs the soul. Why then do those souls still in the body partake more fully in the holy mysteries than those which are loosed from the bonds of the flesh? Is it because they can see the priest and receive the sacrament from his hands? Have not the departed also their eternal Priest, who is

[1] 1 Cor. 6.17. [2] Matt. 15.11,20.
[3] Matt. 9.2–8. Mark 2.5–12. Luke 5.20–25.

all to them, who distributes communion even to those of the living who truly receive him? For not all of those to whom the human priest gives the sacrament receive truly and worthily, but only those to whom Christ gives it. The priest gives communion to anyone who comes, but Christ only to those who are worthy. It is clear that there is only one who perfects and sanctifies souls through the sacrament—the Saviour.

From this, it is evident that all the elements concerned with the holy mysteries are common to the living and the dead. Since the essential causes of sanctification are the property of the soul, they are just as likely to be found among the latter as among the former; in each case there is the same element, which receives sanctification rightly and principally; there is also the same Priest who sanctifies. The only thing which the living who are still in the flesh have which the departed have not is this: that even those who are unworthy of communion seem to receive sanctification since they physically receive the sacrament. For in the other world participation is allowed only to those who are worthy; the unprepared are not even permitted to approach. Yet the ability to receive the sacrament unworthily does not bring holiness to the living; on the contrary, it entails a dreadful punishment; therefore, this power is far from being an advantage to the living.

For the same reason it is clear not only that it is possible for the departed to communicate in the holy mysteries—there is nothing to prevent it—but also that such participation must necessarily take place. If there were in the other world any other source of joy and rest for them, that would be the reward of those who are worthy and pure, and the holy table would not be absolutely necessary for them; but in fact that which brings delight and bliss to those who dwell in that place—whether you choose to call it paradise, or Abraham's bosom, or the place free from pain and sorrow, which is full of light, and green and cool—or even if you call it the kingdom itself—is none other than this chalice and this bread.

For the only source of spiritual joy is the Mediator,[1] who

[1] Heb. 8.6; 9.15; 12.24.

went before us into the holy of holies, and who alone leads us to the Father.[1] He is the light of souls, who now appears and gives himself to us under the appearances of the sacrament, for we are still imprisoned in the flesh; after death we shall behold him and partake of him unveiled, when we shall see him as he really is,[2] when he gathers the eagles round the body,[3] and "he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them";[4] he will come upon the clouds of heaven in glory, and will make the just to shine like the sun.

Those who are cut off from him, and are not joined to him in that intimate union which has made us partakers of his table, cannot enjoy any rest in the other world, or receive there any good, great or small.

44. *The mediation of Christ*

Christ is the mediator through whom all those good things which God has bestowed upon us, or rather which he is continually bestowing upon us, are given. It was not good enough for him to play his part as mediator once only, in obtaining for us all for which he interceded; he intercedes for us continually, not as ambassadors do, by words and pleas, but actively. How does he do this? He unites us to himself, and makes us each, according to our individual merit and purity, sharers through him in those graces which are his own.

Just as the sight of the eye comes from light, and those who are deprived of light cannot see, so continual union with Christ is necessary to the soul, if it is to live fully and enjoy tranquillity. As the eye cannot see without light, so the soul cannot have true life and peace without Christ, for he alone reconciles us to God and is the Author of that peace without which we would still be God's enemies, without hope of sharing in the benefits which come from him.

So, if any man has not been united to Christ at the beginning (by Baptism), or, having been thus united, has not remained in union, he counts as God's enemy, and must therefore be excluded from his riches.

[1] Heb. 6.20; 2.10. John 14.6. [2] John 3.2. [3] Matt. 24.28. [4] Luke 12.37.

What reconciled God to humankind? Simply this, that he saw his beloved son become man. Likewise, he is reconciled personally to every man who wears the stamp of the Only-Begotten, and bears his Body, and shows himself to be one spirit with him. Without these things, each of us remains the old man, hateful to God, and having nothing in common with him.

If therefore it is to be believed that rest comes to souls from the prayers of the priest and the offering of the holy Sacrifice, we must first believe that this is achieved in the only way in which it is possible for man to enjoy rest. We have already told you what this is—reconciliation with God, so that we cease to be his enemies. This only comes from being united with God, and becoming one spirit with the Beloved in whom alone the Father is well-pleased. Now, this is the work of the holy table, and as we have seen it is common to the living and the dead.

45. *That sanctification works more perfectly for the departed*

As far as sanctification is concerned, those souls which are free of the body have an advantage over those still living in the flesh. It is true that they receive, through the prayers of the priest and the intercession of the holy offerings, purification and the remission of their sins, just as the living do. But they can no longer sin, and do not add new wrongdoing to the old, as most of the living do; they are either entirely absolved from all blame, or at least freed for ever from the possibility of further sin. Because of this, they are better disposed for communion with the Saviour, not only than the majority of the living, but also than they would themselves have been if they were still in the flesh. The very fact of being free from the bonds of the flesh makes them far more worthy to receive the holy mysteries than they could possibly have been if they were still housed in their bodies.

We know that in the next world there are many mansions,[1] so that every degree of goodness may be glorified, and none

[1] John 14.2.

may go unrewarded by the most just and loving Judge. Thus, those worthy of the greatest rewards, who are perfect, and who inherit perfect blessedness, such as St Paul, enjoy this happiness more purely after death than they did while still in this life.[1] So also those who are called to a lower position in this place of rest naturally gain more fruit from the mysteries than they did while they were alive.

We have shown that all peace of soul and the entire reward of virtue, be it great or small, consists only in this Bread and this Chalice, which is partaken of by both living and dead. That is why our Lord himself describes the future happiness of the saints as a banquet; it is in order to show that in the next life there will be nothing save the Holy Table. Thus, the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist is for the dead as well as the living, and just as the latter, as we have said, receive a twofold sanctification, so do the former. The dead are in no way inferior to the living; rather, they possess certain advantages over them.

46. *Why the holy offerings are always acceptable to God*

There is another matter to be considered. From what has been said it is clear that all the faithful are sanctified by the holy sacrifice. Whether this is always the case is a question worth examining.

The liturgy consists in the offering of gifts; now gifts are not always accepted by God; some of them, on account of the wickedness of those who offer them, are detested and spurned; you will find many examples of this both under the Old Law and under the New. Let us ask ourselves whether the holy offerings themselves are not sometimes presented at the altar without being consecrated, or accepted, as the words of the liturgy have it, because they are not always offered by good men, but sometimes by evil ones.

The Church's own actions show that God rejects even these holy gifts when they are offered by a criminal. If she knows that a particular person is in a state of mortal sin, she forbids him to make an offering; if he should have the temerity to do

[1] Phil. 1.23.

so, she will not accept them, but will cast out both him and his offering. Nevertheless, the Church cannot always recognize these sinners; most of them remain undetected, and the holy altar receives their offerings. What is the case with such offerings as these? Are they rejected by God and deprived of all sanctification? If this were so, we could never know for certain when consecration took place and when it did not, since the spiritual state of those who make the offerings must always be uncertain, if not completely unknown; the faithful would thus be in doubt, and lack faith in the sacrament, and derive no benefit from it.

Is there any answer to these problems? There is; for the holy gifts are offered twice; the first offering is made by the faithful, who place their gifts in the hands of the priests; the second is made by the Church to God.

If the offerer is in a state of serious sin, then his offering (the first of which we spoke) is of no avail, and brings him no benefit, because of his guilt. For no offering is in itself hateful to God, since everything that he has made is good.

As for the second offering, if it is made by virtuous men, for the glory of God and his saints, and the salvation of the world, and every right intention in general, there is nothing to prevent it from being accepted. For the gifts have not been stained by the hands of him who first offered them; they have remained pure, they are consecrated and bring sanctification to those who approach them. For the stain of sin cannot cast its shadow on any irrational or inanimate being; sin is a disease of the will, and can harm only those endowed with reason.

Why then, if the offerings are always pure even when presented by wicked men, will the law of the Church not accept them? It is in order to warn the offerers, that they may know how great God's wrath against them is, since he spurns and detests his own creations, which of themselves merit no reproach, on account of their sins. When they realize this, they are filled with fear, and amend their lives. But no evil is attributed to the offerings themselves. So nothing prevents them from being consecrated and accepted when the second offering is made by virtuous men.

But. you will say, the priests who make the offerings are not always good men; some of them are guilty of the worst vices; so we are in the same doubt as we were before. When both the offerers are displeasing to God (and this does happen) where do the offerings receive the grace to be acceptable to God and accepted, consecrated and sanctifying? Surely they cannot receive such grace; they must be truly unacceptable. We must therefore be always in doubt, since we can know nothing of the spiritual state either of the offerer or of the priest. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him;"[1] therefore we have serious mistrust and doubt concerning the holy mysteries, and no confidence in them. And of what use is participation in the holy mysteries to the faithful if they lack firm belief?

Such arguments might be justified, and such doubts legitimate, if one regarded the priest as sovereign lord of the offering of the gifts; but he is not. That which brings about their offering is the grace which sanctifies them, since for them, to be offered is to be sanctified. He who celebrates the sacrifice daily is but the minister of the grace. He brings to it nothing of his own, he would not dare to do or say anything according to his own judgement and reason. He offers only that which he has already received, whether it be matter, word or action, back to God, in the manner which is laid down. Since, then, the gifts are always offered to God in a manner which is pleasing to him, they must surely always be accepted.

What does it matter then if, as far as he himself is concerned, the offerer is a wicked man? His wickedness cannot alter the offerings, nor contaminate the act of offering. A medicine loses none of its efficacy through being made up by a simple and foolish man, who knows nothing of the mysteries of the art, providing he does it according to the doctor's prescription, and follows his instructions. Such a medicine would not be rendered useless by the ignorance of the man who administered it; it would, on the contrary, perform its healing work because of the skill of him who prescribed it. It took no

[1] 1 Cor. 2.11.

harm from the stupidity of its preparer, but the skill of the doctor gave it its power.

It is the same here. Grace works all; the priest is only a minister, and that very ministry comes to him by grace; he does not hold it on his own account. For the priesthood is nothing other than a ministerial power over sacred things. But from what has been said it is clear that all the offerings sanctify the faithful always, since they are always accepted by God.

47. *The measure in which the holy offerings are accepted*

Let us now consider in what measure the holy offerings are accepted. What does to receive a gift mean even among us men? What must those who receive the gifts do, in order that it may be said that they have accepted them? Must they take them in their hands, and place them in their bosom? by no means; there are many things which those who receive them could not possibly lift up or carry, such as a field, a house, or something of that kind.

What is it that signifies acceptance in the case of any gift whatsoever? It is the placing of it among our own possessions, and making it our own; that is what is termed acceptance. Now God makes these holy offerings so much his own that he transforms them into the Body and Blood of his only-begotten Son. Surely it is not possible to conceive of anything to equal such an appropriation, nor to set a measure to the way in which these gifts are accepted.

One can also tell how a gift has been received by what is given in return. And what is the return made to us here? Once more, it is the Body and Blood of Christ; for God accepts our bread and wine, and gives us in return his own Son. How, you will say, do we know that God grants us such an exchange for our offerings? From the very words of him who was clothed in this Body; he said to us "Take it", thus showing us the gift he was bestowing upon us. These words signify him who gives, him who accepts, and that which is given.

It is possible to receive things in another way: as a trust,

which those who accept it have no right to use. But to prevent you from thinking that the holy mysteries are a gift of this kind, and to assure you that they are truly yours, God has commanded you to use it, saying: "Eat." It is in such superabundant measure that God has accepted the offerings. Because of this, they always sanctify all Christian souls, living and dead, which stand in need of sanctification. But those saints who are already perfect, and who have a place among the angels in the heavenly hierarchy, no longer need the intercession of the terrestrial hierarchy.

48. *Why we venerate and honour the saints by these gifts*

Another question arises out of this: if, on the one hand, the holy offerings are dedicated to God, and on the other, work sanctification in those who are in need of it, why do we hold that those who are already sanctified and made perfect will derive some profit from them? And why, when we call upon the saints to come to our aid, and obtain for us some favour, do we promise them a liturgy, as if it were a question either of offering it to them or of offering it for them that they may become better?

It is because the offering of the holy gifts has yet another aspect, as we have said before, according to which these gifts belong also to the saints; it is when they are offered to God in thanksgiving for the glory and perfection which he has bestowed upon them. The offerings belong to God, since they are offered to him; as a divine aid, they belong also to the faithful, who have need of them; and they belong also to the saints, insofar as they are offered to God in their honour.

Anything which is given because of me is given to me, whoever may actually receive it. We do not receive in our own hands all that is given us; but they are sometimes received by our kinsmen and friends—in short, by anyone to whom a gift is given in order to please us. Therefore the Lord said that anyone who received the poor for his sake received him.[1] Similarly, the saints receive the holy gifts because we offer them to God in their honour. Just as we give alms for love of

[1] Matt. 25.40.

Christ, so the sacrifice is offered for love of the saints; because we love them dearly, we consider their good as our own, and congratulate them on their happiness as if we were sharers in their honour. Thus, rejoicing in the good things bestowed upon them by God, we give thanks to him who gave, and offer our gifts in thanksgiving.

It is not only because the offerings are made for love of them that the saints receive their gifts; another reason is this: that nothing is more delightful and pleasing to them than that we should give thanks and praise to God because of them. If the greatest evil wrought by wicked men is this—that because of them God's name is blasphemed, the greatest longing and desire of the saints is that God should be glorified because of them. This is what they strove for perpetually while still in the flesh; now that they are in heaven, it is their unending task, their delight and the source of all their joy. When they possessed these joys only in hope, they gave all their time to giving thanks to God and doing all things for his glory;[1] what must they feel now, when their gratitude and thanksgiving are so much greater, and they are perfect in every virtue, when they no longer need hope for happiness, but know by experience the loving-kindness of the Lord; when they see what they were, and what they have become—the children of the dust are become as the sun, the despised slaves are now honoured sons and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; they who were formerly guilty now have the power to absolve others from their faults, owing to their power of intercession with the Judge. Because of this they can never praise God enough; they do not consider their own thanksgiving sufficient. That is why they desire that men and angels should unite with them in praising God, so that their debt of gratitude to him may be a little more worthily paid, owing to an increase in the number of those who praise him.

The holy sons of Azarias, who by the grace of God overcame the flames of the fiery furnace, bear witness to this.[2] It was fitting that they should give thanks to God for their miraculous and unexpected delivery; but they did not consider their own praise and acclamation sufficient—they called

[1] 1 Thess. 5.18. [2] Dan. 3.13–20, and Song of the Three Children v. 68.

to their aid the angels and every race of man, the heavens, the sun, the stars, the earth, the mountains, inanimate beings —in short, the whole of creation. Such is the desire of the saints that God should be praised, even when they are living in the flesh; how much greater must it be when they are freed from the body.

So he who, recalling their dignity, happiness and glory, praises God who has honoured them, gives them the greatest joy of all; and especially when he praises him not by words alone but by the offering of gifts in thanksgiving, these gifts which he finds so acceptable, so precious and worthy of honour. Then, while the Saviour, graciously receiving these offerings, gives us in return his Body and Blood, an exchange which surpasses all lawful sacrifice, the saints themselves, rejoicing in them as in no other offering with which we honour them, place themselves entirely at our disposal, ready to aid us in any way we require; for in every way they follow the example of their Lord.

49. *Against those who maintain that the commemoration of the saints in the liturgy is a prayer to God on their behalf*

In this matter, many have been led into error; they regard the commemoration of the saints not as a thanksgiving, but as a prayer to God on their behalf. I do not know where they got such an idea, for neither the facts nor the words of the liturgy support such a supposition.

Since the facts are so much against this strange assertion, it will not be difficult to prove our point.

If the Church were really praying for the saints, she would obviously ask for them those benefits for which she has always prayed. Those things for which she prays on behalf of the dead are these—the remission of their sins, the inheritance of the kingdom, and rest in Abraham's bosom with the perfect saints. You will not find her asking for anything else on behalf of the faithful departed. Our prayers to God have been fixed within these limits. For it is not permissible to pray for everything which comes into one's head; here too there is a law, and a boundary which cannot be crossed. Does not the Apostle say: "We know not what to pray for, but the Spirit itself prayeth for us";[1] according to the Doctors of the Church this means that the Spirit teaches us what to pray for.

Look then and see whether the Church in her many ceremonies and prayers asks for anything more than is mentioned above; you will not find anything.

Are we to ask for the remission of the sins of the innocent, as if they were guilty and had an account to render? Or pray that the saints may rest with the saints, as if they were not already sanctified? Or ask that the perfect be made perfect, as if they were not so already?

One way or the other they are in the wrong. Either, acknowledging the blessedness and perfection of the saints they are deliberately jesting with God, and offering vain prayers on their behalf—conduct more becoming to mockers of the Divinity than to priests; or they make their prayers in all seriousness, and believe that they can aid the saints, thus denying their glory—and this is an insult not only to them but to God, implying that he does not keep his promises. For God promised to glorify the saints, and to give them a place in his kingdom.

Or rather, there is a double blasphemy. For on the one hand these people deny the beatitude of the saints absolutely, and on the other they behave as if they denied it. Because—since they ask for the same things for both—they put those whom they believe to be in a state of blessedness, whom they claim as having a place among the sons and heirs of the kingdom, on a level with those who have not yet received their reward, who are without honour, and who still have an account to render.

Therefore, in view of the facts, it is absurd to believe that the offering which the Church makes to God on behalf of the saints is supplicatory.

Let us consider the words themselves: "We offer thee also this spiritual sacrifice for those who rest in faith; our ancestors, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, virgins and every soul made perfect in faith;

[1] Rom. 8.26.

especially for our all-holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, for St John the Baptist, prophet and forerunner, the holy and illustrious apostles and all the saints; vouchsafe, O God, through their intercession, to look upon us. Be mindful also of all who have died in the hope of resurrection and everlasting life, and make them to rest there where the light of thy countenance shines."

There are the words. They contain no prayer to God on behalf of the saints; the priest does not utter any of the usual petitions for them. But as soon as he mentions the rest of the faithful departed, he adds a prayer for them: "Make them to rest there where the light of thy countenance shines." The opposite is the case with the saints; for he does not intercede for them, but asks them to intercede for us. Does he not, after mentioning the saints, say: "Vouchsafe through their intercession to look upon us"? The most convincing evidence that these words are not a prayer or a supplication, but an act of thanksgiving for the saints is the presence of the name of the Mother of God in this list. She would not have been mentioned if this throng were in need of intercession, for she is not only above all human mediation, but above that of the angelic hierarchy also, since she is incomparably holier than the purest spirit.

But, you will say, Christ himself is offering this sacrifice. Would it be strange if he were to intercede for the saints and for his Mother? This is utterly unreasonable. Such is not Christ's mode of intercession. He is Mediator between God and man, not by his words or prayers, but in himself; because he is both God and man, he has reunited the two, making himself the meeting-ground of both. To think that his intercession is always made through the prayers of the liturgy is rank blasphemy and folly.

For even if it is true that Christ performs the sacrifice, we cannot attribute everything that is said and done throughout the liturgy to him. He alone accomplishes the special work and purpose of the liturgy—the consecration of the offerings and the sanctification of the faithful; but the prayers, supplications and demands which surround these rites are the acts of the priest. The first are the works of the Lord, the rest the work of servants; the latter prays, while the former answers prayer. The Saviour gives, and the priest offers thanks for what has been given; the priest offers, and the Lord accepts what is offered. Our Lord, it is true, offers too, but he offers himself to the Father, and also the gifts, when they have become his Body and Blood. It is because he offers himself that he is described both as offering and offerer, and as the receiver of the offering; he is as God the offerer and receiver, and as man the offering. But as regards the bread and wine, when they are still simply gifts, it is the priest who offers them and the Lord who receives.

What does he do in receiving them? He sanctifies them, and turns them into his own Body and Blood; for it is the true nature of receiving to appropriate a thing to oneself, so that it becomes in a sense oneself, as we have said before. That is how Christ celebrates this sacrifice; in this his Priesthood consists.

If therefore any man maintains that, apart from the matters we have just mentioned, the prayers of the liturgy are Christ's, he is in this no different from those evil men who have dared to detract from his glory. If you read the prayers from beginning to end, you will find that they are couched in language befitting servants. Read the commemoration of the saints, which they dare to attribute to Christ; you will find nothing there which befits the Son equal in honour with the Father; all are the words of servants.

In the first place, it is not the thanksgiving of a single person, but of our whole race; those who give thanks are men who have sinned, and yet have not been abandoned by God's goodness and mercy; and they give thanks not only to the Father, but to the Son and the Holy Ghost also. Besides, they commemorate the Mother of God as servants would their queen, and they ask that through her intercession and that of the saints they may obtain God's presence and support.

Have such as these anything in common with the One Lord, the only-begotten Son of God, he who is without sin and Master of all things? "We give thanks," says the priest, "to thee and thine only-begotten Son". Does Christ then give

thanks to the only-begotten Son of God? If this were so, there would be two Gods, as the madness of Nestorius maintained. This shows how wicked and foolish it is to think that Christ intercedes on behalf of the saints, and to attribute to him such intercession and mediation.

We have shown that this is not, in fact, the meaning of the liturgical text. "Very well", you will say. "Yet the words carry a certain nuance of supplication, the preposition 'for' (ὑπέρ) has this meaning."

Not at all; it does not always imply supplication. We use it not only when we are asking for something, but also when we are giving thanks. This can be seen in many examples, and particularly in the present prayer: "*For* all these things we give thanks to thee and to thine only-begotten Son, and to the Holy Spirit." "For all that we know and all that we do not know we give thee thanks; and also for this sacrifice, which thou hast deigned to accept at our hands." You can see that the word *for* is here used in thanksgiving; therefore those who err on this point can offer no excuse.

It is clearly impossible for the commemoration of the saints to be supplicatory. And the very fact that it is not shows that it must be eucharistic, for it has to be one or the other. There are only two ways in which we can mention before God the benefits that come to us from him; either that we may receive them or because we have already received them. The former is supplication, the latter thanksgiving. Another proof is this: the perfect holiness of the saints is God's greatest gift to men, and it would be most wicked of the Church not to thank him for it. Do I say that this perfection of the saints is his greatest gift? Rather, it is the whole of his gift. For the choir of saints is the completion and the fruit of all the benefits he has bestowed upon our race; for it heaven and earth and the whole created universe were made; paradise, the prophets, the Incarnate God himself and his teachings, works, Passion and Death had but one purpose—that men might be raised from earth to heaven, that they might inherit the kingdom.

If then the liturgy really contains thanksgiving; if the holy offerings are eucharistic as well as supplicatory, it is essential that the perfection of the saints should be the motive and cause of that thanksgiving.

For is not the receiving of that for which we have petitioned the mainspring of gratitude in us? This is surely self-evident; and therefore what we pray for and we give thanks for are one and the same. Now, what does the Church pray for? She prays for that for which God has commanded her to pray—the kingdom of heaven; she prays that her faithful may inherit it, that they may become holy as he who has called them is holy. Since she asks these things of God, it is clearly also these for which she gives thanks. The Church prays that the faithful may be made perfect in holiness, so it is reasonable and fitting that she should give thanks for the perfected saints to him who has sanctified them. It is because of this thanksgiving for the saints that the holy liturgy is called the Eucharist. For, though we make mention of many other benefits, yet the saints are the end of all, and it is because of them that we ask for all the other things; so that when the Church gives thanks for anything, it is always for the perfection of the saints that she is giving thanks. All that the Lord has made was made that the choir of saints might be established; and the Church, whenever she gives thanks, has the choir of saints in mind. That is why our Saviour, in instituting this holy sacrament, gave thanks to God, since by it he was to open for us the gates of heaven, and to gather there the assembly of the firstborn. Following his example, the Church offers her gifts in thanksgiving as well as in supplication. She demonstrates this in many places, and particularly in the prayer which contains the whole scope of the sacrifice. After she has named all the benefits which God has bestowed on us and given thanks for them, she speaks of the coming of the Lord in the flesh, and of the institution of this sacrament, and his command to "Do this". Then she adds: "Therefore, calling to mind this saving precept, and all that was done for our sakes, the Cross, etc." She speaks of all that followed the Crucifixion, and then says: "We offer to thee that which is thine; in all and for all we praise thee, we bless thee, we give thee thanks, O Lord, and we pray to thee our God."

Do you see? The Church says: "We make this oblation mindful of thy benefits." Surely this is thanksgiving, to honour with our holy offerings the Benefactor for the good things he has given us. Then expressing her thanksgiving even more clearly, she adds: "In offering this oblation, we praise thee, we bless thee, we give thee thanks, O Lord, and we pray to thee our God."

This then is the purpose of the offering of the holy gifts—to praise, to give thanks, and to supplicate, as we said at the beginning; so the sacrifice is at once eucharistic and supplicatory. And we do this, says the Church, being mindful of two things—of our Lord's command, when he said: "Do this in remembrance of me", and also of all that he has done for us.

The mere remembering of the benefits bestowed upon us rouses us to make some sort of return, and to offer something at least to him who has showered so many graces on us. And when we remember his command, the way in which we should make return and the gifts we should offer become clear to us. We offer to thee that same offering which thine only-begotten son himself offered to thee, God, his Father; and we give thanks to thee in offering it because he gave thanks. We bring to this offering of gifts nothing of our own; for the gifts are not our own work, but thine, thou Creator of all. Neither is this form of worship of our own conceiving; we had not even imagined it, we were not brought to it of our own accord, but thou didst teach us, thou didst urge us to it through thine only-begotten Son. That is why that which we offer thee of those things which thou hast given, is in all things and through all things solely thine.

So then, we owe God another act of thanksgiving for the eucharistic sacrifice itself, since nothing of it is ours; all is his gift, since he wished it and accomplished it. It is he who works in us, as the Apostle says. That is why we say in the prayers of the liturgy: "We give thee thanks also for this sacrifice, which thou hast deigned to accept at our hands."

All this proves that the commemoration of the saints in the liturgy is not a prayer to God on their behalf, but an act of thanksgiving.

50. *How many times the commemoration of the saints takes place, and the difference between these commemorations*

Let us see how many times the saints are commemorated in the liturgy, and where these commemorations occur. The commemoration takes place twice; first at the beginning, when the offerings are dedicated, and secondly after they are sacrificed.

For the oblation is twofold; first there is that of the bread and wine as simple gifts, as we have said before; then there is their oblation as a sacrifice. That is why it is necessary to commemorate on each occasion those in whose honour or for whom the sacrifice is offered.

At the first commemoration, the priest says: "In memory of our Lord our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." At the second: "Calling to mind what was accomplished for our sake, the Cross and the sufferings which Christ endured for us." The Cross and the other things mentioned here are signified by the commemoration of the Lord in the first case. For at the first oblation the priest represents Christ, not as a miracle-worker, but as crucified and dying, as we have already amply shown when we were discussing this.

Likewise, at the first oblation the priest says: "To the glory of the all-holy Virgin, and through the intercession of the saints"; at the second: "For all the saints, especially the all-holy Virgin." He has shown her eminence by placing her at the head of the others at the first oblation, and by inserting the word "especially" at the second.

At the first oblation, the priest calls to mind, after the saints, those who have need of mercy, and for whom he prays, i.e. the living and the dead, and likewise at the second oblation.

Nevertheless, there is a difference; at the second oblation, the priest names the offering—"This spiritual sacrifice"—and then gives the reasons for the offerings by calling to mind first the Passion of the Saviour, and secondly the saints. At the first oblation, he gives only the reasons for the offering, saying "In memory of the Lord, to the glory of the all-holy

Virgin" and the rest of the phrase, in which he calls to mind those for whom he gives thanks and those for whom he prays. But he does not name the offering itself. Why is this? It is because here there is no need; he shows what the offering is when he takes a piece of the bread and dedicates it to God.

At the second oblation, however, the priest is not performing any action; the oblation is made in an invisible manner. Grace works the sacrifice unseen through the consecratory prayers of the priest. So it is necessary to express in words this invisible offering.

51. *Why the priest calls the sacrifice a "reasonable service"*[1]

It is for the same reason that he calls the oblation a "reasonable" sacrifice; that is to say, because he himself does nothing, and only makes this oblation by the use of the words of consecration.

The first oblation was something which man could do, and when the priest did it, it was a sort of active service. But the second, the changing of the offerings into the Divine Body and Blood, which is the true sacrifice, is beyond human power, and is brought about by grace; the priest only prays.

The sacrifice is truly an act and a reality, but since the priest performs no action, but simply pronounces the words, he describes it not as an active, but as a "reasonable service".

52. *Why the sacrifice is called the Eucharist*

There is one more question to be considered. Since the sacrifice is both eucharistic and supplicatory, why does it not bear both names? Why is it simply called the Eucharist?

It is because it takes its name from the more important element. Our reasons for thanksgiving are more numerous than those for supplication, since the number of benefits which we have received exceeds that of which we still have need; the latter are only a part, the former are the whole. The benefits we ask for are simply a part of what we have obtained already. For as far as the things of God are concerned we have been given everything; there is nothing which

[1] Rom. 12.1.

he has not given us; some of these, however, it is not yet time for us to enjoy, such as bodily incorruptibility, immortality, and the kingdom of heaven. There are others, too, which we do not keep when we have received them, such as the remission of sins and other sacramental graces; some we have lost, because we have made bad use of them, lest we become worse, such as comfort, health, and riches, which we have made instruments of wickedness and sinful pleasure; or perhaps, like Job, we have been deprived of them in view of a greater good.

From this it is clear that it is not God who makes supplication necessary, but we ourselves; he has furnished us only with cause for thanksgiving, but we through our weakness have put ourselves in need, so that supplication is necessary.

What is it that we ask for? The remission of sins? But we received that in abundance, and without any effort or striving on our part, at Baptism. Why do we ask for it again? Because we have become guilty once more, owing to our sins. We are the cause of this guilt, so we are also the cause of supplication.

Again, we ask that we may be made heirs of the kingdom. Now, this inheritance has already been given to us; for we have been made children of God, the heart of the kingdom, and who shall inherit, if not the children? Or what shall the heir lose of his father's goods? Nothing. Why then do we ask for what has already been given? Because, after being born of God and raised to such an honour, we have behaved in a manner which is totally contrary to that of an adopted son. So, from being sons, we have become wicked slaves. That is why we ask for a good which has departed from us, and which is in no way due to us. Again, we ourselves are the cause of supplication.

As far as worldly goods are concerned, our Lord has said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."[1] And he has also told us not to worry about what we shall eat and drink, since our heavenly Father knows that we have need of these things.[2] If we lack them, then it is either a punishment for our weakness and lack of confidence, and our disobeying of

[1] Matt. 6.33. [2] Matt. 6.25–32. Luke 12.22–31.

the commandments on this subject, so that our poverty is self-caused, as is the supplication it provokes, or else we are being tested by the all-seeing wisdom and merciful bounty of God, as Job was, in order that we may attain more precious things. But, although this poverty is the work of God, it produces, not supplication, but praise and thanksgiving. Did not Job say: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."[1]

You can see that the gifts which God bestows upon us lead only to praise and thanksgiving; we are the cause of demand and supplication. So that all benefits, material or spiritual, which we call to mind in our intercourse with God are mentioned with a view to thanksgiving, whether or not we possess them. For he gave once and for all, and held nothing back. St Paul realized this when he wrote: "Rejoice evermore. In every thing give thanks."[2]

As a result, it was only fitting that the name of Eucharist should be given to the most perfect and intimate of our conversations with God, the sacrament of communion, in which we do not mention any particular grace, but speak in general terms of the benefits bestowed upon us by God, both those which we already have and those which are to come. It was right that its name should be taken from God's infinite generosity, not from the supplication to which our wretchedness has condemned us.

It is true that in the holy sacrifice we make supplication as well as thanksgiving to God; but the thanksgiving is God's work, the supplication is the result of our weakness. Thanksgiving is concerned with a far wider field than supplication is. It is concerned with absolutely everything; supplication with only a few things. That is why the sacrament was called the Eucharist; it takes its name from the greater and better elements. In the same way man, although sharing in some ways the nature of the beasts, is called a rational animal, taking his title from the better and nobler part of his nature.

One final reason—our Lord Jesus Christ, who instituted this sacrament, did not make supplication when he did so; he gave thanks to the Father. So the Church, which received it from him, has called it the Eucharist, or thanksgiving.

[1] Job. 1.21. [2] 1 Thess. 5.16,18.

VI

THANKSGIVING AND CLOSING PRAYERS

53. *Thanksgiving after the communion, and the closing prayers*

The priest now calls upon all who have received communion to make their thanksgiving to God, and to do it with fervour, not as a matter of tiresome duty. This is the meaning of the cry 'Ορθοί, which indicates that they should be standing up, not reclining or sitting at their ease, but intent on God in both body and soul. Then, having urged them to make the other usual requests in prayer to God, he leaves the sanctuary, and, standing before the gates, he says a prayer on behalf of them all. After the sacrifice is completed with its concluding doxology and the holy rites have been duly performed, one should note how the priest brings to an end, as it were, his communing with God, and gradually descends from these heights to converse with mankind. He does this as befits a priest, for it is in prayer, and both the manner and the place of his prayer symbolize his descent. First of all within the sanctuary he addresses himself to God and prays secretly on his own behalf. Then he leaves the sanctuary and standing in the midst of the congregation he says aloud, so that everyone can hear, the prayer of common supplication for the Church and for all the faithful. Then the bread which has been offered up, and from which the Sacred Host was taken, is broken into small pieces and given to the faithful as something which has been hallowed by being dedicated and offered to God. The faithful receive this with all reverence, kissing

the hand which has so recently touched the all-holy Body of the Saviour Christ and which, thus sanctified, can communicate this sanctification to those who touch it. And so they glorify him who is the Origin and Dispenser of these blessings which they receive. This doxology is taken from the Scriptures: "Blessed be the name of the Lord",[1] and so on. This is proclaimed several times, and then they say a psalm which particularly stresses doxology and thanksgiving. Which is this psalm? It is Ps. 34, "I will bless the Lord at all times". After the distribution of the bread and after the psalm, the priest says the last prayer over the people. This is not only said outside the sanctuary and in a manner which can be heard by all, but the words of the prayer are addressed directly to the congregation itself, thus showing the increasing extent to which the priest is now associating himself with the people. What is this prayer? It is that we may be saved through obtaining mercy, for we have of ourselves nothing that merits salvation, but we look only towards him who loves mankind and is able to save us. Therefore at this point he makes mention of many intercessors who can help us, and especially the all-holy Mother of God who was the vessel whereby Mercy was first brought to us. The prelude of the prayer is: "Christ, our true God." There is no longer any question of those false gods, those sham divinities, whom we once worshipped in such numbers, but of him, "our true God", whom we have now found after great struggles. And so it is that we owe all glory, honour, and worship to him alone, as to God, together with his eternal Father and his most holy and good and lifegiving Spirit, now and always for ever and ever. Amen.

[1] Job 1.21.